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# Dragon<sup>®</sup> MAGAZINE

BUILDING A BETTER PC!

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The Saddle  
(again!)

I'M OK,  
YOU'RE  
ONE DIMENSIONAL

Campaign Classics:  
THE GREYHAWK  
GRIMOIRES



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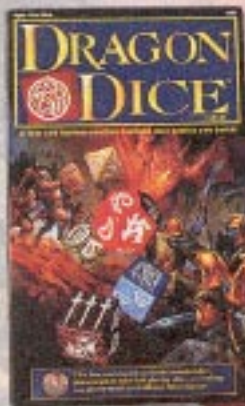


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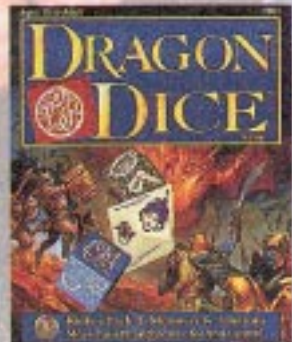
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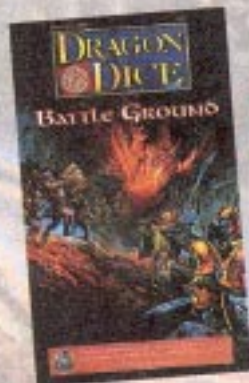
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# The Wyrms' Turn

## Finally (Whew!)

**W**ell, it was a long time in the making, but you are holding in your hands the new **DRAGON® Magazine**.

We have listened to your suggestions. Some of them were insightful, some were downright brilliant. And others were, well... just imaginative. We made a mockup of the perfect **DRAGON Magazine**, incorporating every change and proposal.

No one could lift it.

After more trial and error, we came up with what you hold now.

The cosmetic change you will notice right away. The cover probably surprised you. Since we've gone to polybagging our magazine to help keep it pristine, we need cover blurbs to tell you what's inside; but opposite this editorial, for your pleasure, is the original Jeff Easley painting that graces our cover.

The internal changes you will notice, but it may take a few months for the real flavor to sink in, as not all of the changes we are making will be visible right away. For starters, we have added several new departments and done away with a few.

One of the new departments we've added is Campaign Classics. In this department, we will present material for one or another of TSR's various discontinued worlds. We want those of you who have bought our products to know that we appreciate and haven't abandoned you. This month concerns magical tomes from the **WORLD OF GREYHAWK®**. Next month it is about Zakhara, from **AL-QADIM®**. We may go SpellJamming; we may have some **Oriental Adventures**; we may even travel in time to yesterday's Wild West (**BOOT HILL®**), the Cold War's KGB headquarters in Moscow (**TOP SECRET®**), or a post-apocalyptic Philadelphia (**GAMMA WORLD®**). It all depends on what you want to see.

We have also added a new Rogue's Gallery. Each month we will present one gaming character for use in your campaigns as a nonplayer character. Do you have a favorite you've been working with for a while? Send it in with a character sketch, TSR's standard disclosure, form and who knows? Your favorite elven mage may just end up in the 'Gallery. (Remember to put "attention:

Rogue's Gallery" on the envelope.)

If you look at DragonMirth, you will notice that we have ended "Yamara" and will be ending "Libram X" (next month we will run the final installment), and we started "Floyd" a bit early to give you a taste. We're also pleased to announce that **DRAGON Magazine** now has Jolly Blackburn's gamer comic "Knights of the Dinner Table," which originally ran in *Shadis*. "Knights" will begin running in February with all new material. New comic features may appear over time, as well.

It will be a couple of months before our miniatures department reappears. We're trying to broaden the way we look at miniatures and are still fine-tuning that section.

Readers tell us they enjoy our reviews, so book and game reviews will have a home here every month. We will place a moratorium on computer reviews *per se*, however. There are other magazines out there that can focus on computer games better than we can. Have no fear, however, that we will fail to tell you about interesting developments with computer role-playing games and computer gaming aids.

The focus of the magazine itself is tighter, too. Expect more articles to tie more closely to the theme of each individual issues. On the other hand, we will have other material off the theme topic for those who want more; we want everyone to be able to appreciate each issue.

We are returning **DRAGON Magazine** to its roots as not only the premier magazine in the gaming industry but the most important magazine for gamers. **DRAGON Magazine** remains the source for players of the AD&D® game, the most popular role-playing system ever. Every issue will have articles or features you can take right to your gaming table and use. We intend **DRAGON Magazine** to be the single most indispensable aid for gamers after the basic books themselves.

Are we dropping articles on other game companies' products? No; we'll still present something if it has a gaming slant we think our readers want. There aren't that many real role-playing gaming magazines out there, after all.

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January 1996

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### Skills & Powers in Eight Easy Steps

**John D. Rateliff and Skip Williams**

*Following this simple step-by-step how-to, you can design unique player characters using the new PLAYER'S OPTION™: Skills & Powers book.*

**Page 11**

### Secret Origins and Motivations of Player Characters

**Fraser Sherman**

*A little skeleton in the closet never hurt anyone. Sometimes it gives a whole new spin to the way your PC views the world, and the way the world views your PC.*

**Page 18**



### Caste of Characters

**Michael A. Selinker**

*The Indian subcontinent comes alive with new PC and NPC kits; from paladin-like Kshatrias to ascetic Yogis, it's all here.*

**Page 22**



### I'm Okay, You're One-Dimensional

**David Clarke**

*Having trouble coming up with a clear personality for your PCs? Look no further than the nearest TV screen.*

**Page 36**



### Back in the Saddle (Again)

**Clayton R. Beal**

*Why is mining a Wisdom-based skill? Time for a fresh look at how we handle nonweapon proficiencies.*

**Page 44**



## Departments

### Campaign Classics: Three Greyhawk Grimoires

Robert S. Mullin

Learn about the spellbooks of the most feared mages of Oerth: Vecna, Iggwilv, and Acererak.

Page 49

### Rogue's Gallery: D'Naleri

Robert Martin

Meet D'Naleri, a 9th-level elven fighter/mage. Behave well; for even though he is in self-imposed exile, the blood of elven kings flows in his veins.

Page 69

### Dungeon Mastety: What To Do When Your Party Wants To Split Up

Paul Culotta

Next time your players want to go off in different directions, try this little trick to keep things interesting.

Page 84

## SPECIAL THIS ISSUE!

### 76 DRAGON DICE™ Tournament Rules

Here they are: the official Floor Rules for DRAGON DICE tournaments. Complete with record sheets!

### 104 The Changing Faces Of DRAGON® Magazine

A retrospective of the past designs of DRAGON® Magazine.



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6 ..... D-Mail  
*Readers' letters on writing for TSR, the value of old DRAGONS, auto trade-ins, etc.*

42 ..... RPGA® Network News  
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73 ..... Forum  
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81 ..... Sage Advice  
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## FICTION

### Kindling

(DRAGONLANCE®: Tales of the Fifth Age)

Jean Rabe

It has been two years since Krynn felt the Dragons of Summer Flame. Things were just starting to return to normal, when Ansalon's newest and most terrifying foe appeared.

Page 60





## We Want Drizzt!

Dear Dragon,

We were wondering if you know if R.A. Salvatore intends to write another Drizzt Do'Urden novel. We are avid readers of this series, and it would kill us to think that there won't be another one, especially with all the loose ends left in the last book. We are getting so desperate that we have begun to work out the plot for ourselves, and if Salvatore doesn't write it, we will. We know that there must be hundreds of loyal Drizzt fans out there, breathlessly awaiting any news of a new book about the hero.

We were also wondering if you could suggest any particularly good dungeons for exceptionally large parties. We have 11 characters, one big dog, and a really annoying little raccoon. We think our DM is about to lose it trying to deal with us.

Megan Rogers &  
Kelli Burnham

*Bob is working on a new Drizzt novel to be released next August, called Passage to Dawn. If you want to write your own Drizzt fiction, be careful; remember that copying it or selling it would violate copyrights held on that material by TSR, Inc. I don't mean to sound harsh about this, but companies have to be protective of their trademarks or they lose valuable commodities.*

*As for dungeons for your party, that would depend on your relative levels. I've*

*played in games with similar numbers; you're right, it can get hectic.*

*Are you playing with 11 people or are some of you doing two characters each? (That's the way we do it in my campaigns; that way, if someone's PC dies, they're still able to play out the game.)*

*There are plenty of possibilities, but you have to recognize that even the best DM can get a brain lockup trying to keep track of 11 PCs. You didn't mention NPCs or henchmen; we ignore them in my campaigns, too.*

*If you like serious dungeon-type adventures, I'd recommend our newly released Night Below. It could keep you busy for a long time. I'm planning on using it. Good luck!*

*I'd recommend that you not take the dog in the dungeon with you; barks can echo in ways you don't want. I don't know what to tell you about the raccoon, though...*

## Is Dragon #35 Really Worth a Quarter?

Dear Dragon,

I have in my possession *DRAGON* Magazine volumes in the 30s to low 100s. I no longer role-play, and was wondering if they had any value to collectors. A local comic seller has offered to help me dispose of them for 25¢ each. Would I be lucky to get that for them, or are there people who value such magazines?

Kent S. Davis  
Kansas City, KS

*I'm sorry, Kent, but your letter prompted a bit of amusement here. Someone offered you 25¢ for *DRAGON* Magazines in the double digits and he was serious? We get questions asking about the value of old *DRAGONS* a lot, and my usual response is "Their value is what you can get for them." In this case, however, you are dealing with someone who is very good, obviously, about collecting.*

*I can't quote you any specific price, but your magazines are worth a heck of a lot more than 25¢ each.*

*For the record, no, we won't print "I want to sell my *DRAGONS*" ads. This is a one-time public service, to let you know that there are dealers who will zap you given a chance. You have to shop around.*

## Writing for TSR

Dear Dragon,

I want to write a novel for TSR, Inc. What should I do to get it published? And why is the letters' mailing address the same as for R.A. Salvatore's fan mail?

Nathan Lind  
Arkansas City, Kansas

*Actually, R.A. Salvatore's fan mail is sent to us at TSR and we forward it on to him. This helps protect his privacy.*

*As for writing a novel for TSR, I wish I could say it's easy, but it's not. (It never is...) First, you have to become a good writer. Learn the craft of plotting, creating dialogue, and developing characters. Then get an agent (this step is optional), publish a book or two, and then send us a proposal for a book. Address book proposals to Managing Editor, Books Department, TSR, Inc., 201 Sheridan Springs Rd., Lake Geneva, WI 53147.*

## The Trade-In Analogy Revisited

Dear Dragon,

In issue #223, you printed a letter entitled "Athas 2.0." In this letter, the author suggests a discount on updated items for purchasers of the originals. He used similar policies by software companies as an analogy. You responded by giving him an analogy of new car purchases. I can relate to what you were trying to convey, but the car analogy does not show an anomaly. Using your example, if I purchase a 1995 Corvette, I do expect them to give me a discount when the 1996 model comes out. This is called

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a "trade in" in the confines of the auto industry, and is actually quite common. I think Mr. Taylor's idea is an excellent one, and I breathlessly await a new analogy.

Richard G. Sizemore  
Metairie, LA

*I thought you had me for a moment. After giving it some thought, it occurred to me that the manufacturer of the car isn't giving you your refund on the trade in; the dealership is. For your analogy to work, you'd have to take the old product back to the gaming store and get the owner to sell you the new one at a discount in return.*

*I don't expect gaming stores will really develop a flourishing business in lower-cost pre-owned game products; but I would salute the efforts of any who wanted to try. It actually could be a way of getting business from people who can't afford all the newest bells and whistles (like on some of those Italian muscle cars...).*

*In an extension of the auto industry analogy, however, some of the more exotic items (like a first edition of Eldritch Wizardry or a 1963 Corvette) can be sold to dealers who will be happy to sell them to collectors.*

*I understand the point, however. I just wish computer hardware companies gave discounted or free upgrades like the software people do. My new PowerMac would be much easier on my aching checkbook that way.*



*We'd like to hear from you.*

*Please send any correspondence to us at DRAGON® Magazine, 201 Sheridan Springs Road, Lake Geneva, WI 53147. (You can also send e-mail to our online address: TSRmags@aol.com.) Please note on your envelopes "Submissions," "Letters," or "Forum." We generally can't reply personally, but if you expect a personal reply, please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE). Enclose International Reply Coupons (IRCs) with your SAE if you are writing from outside the United States.*

## Editorial

*Continued from page 3*

There are many magazines for card collectors, but only a couple for people who actually are interested role-playing games; and *Dragon Magazine* has the lead position.

This year, the fiction in *DRAGON Magazine* will have a special purpose. Since the ravaging of Krynn in *Dragons of Summer Flame*, many have expressed concern that *DRAGONLANCE* was coming to a close. Not so. To herald the release later this year of a new TSR game entitled *DRAGONLANCE®: FIFTH AGE™*, we are going to run a 12-month arc of fiction dealing with some of the events on Krynn between the events of *Summer Flame* and the date of the box game. If you like Krynn, you'll love our Tales of the Fifth Age.

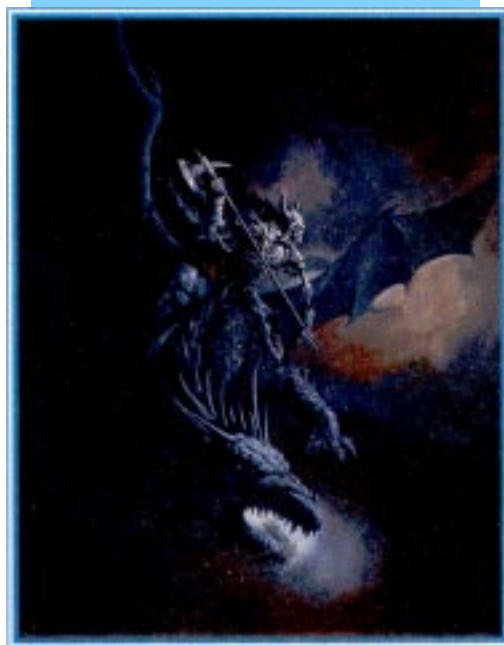
In addition, we'll be returning to the old *DRAGON Magazine* tradition of giving you more with your magazine. Throughout the year, we'll have other things in the magazine that you can get only if you buy or subscribe.

Finally, we will have a bonus thirteenth issue, the *Dragon Magazine Annual*, which will come out near the end of this year. The Annual will have many new and interesting features, and perhaps a few old surprises as well. The *Annual* will be free to subscribers and will be available for purchase wherever *Dragon Magazine* is sold.

That's pretty much it. We'd rather have you reading the magazine than this column, so turn the page and enjoy. Please let us know what you think. As always, we appreciate any feedback.

Now turn the page. And have fun.

## On the Cover:



*We knew that we needed to have a particularly dynamic image for this special issue. Is anyone out there really surprised that we turned to the work of Jeff Easley? This image, which we here have only referred to as "Jeff's Black Dragon Painting" seemed to meet all requirements and more. In case you missed it, we've printed the art, sans coverlines and clutter, on page 2. And for those of you who will undoubtedly ask... no, there are no plans (yet) for a poster. But, rest assured, this painting isn't going to gather dust in the back of the artroom closet.*

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Coming December of 1995



A Collectible Card Game set in the world of J.R.R. Tolkien



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Charlottesville, VA 22902 USA  
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# SKILLS & POWERS <sup>IN</sup> EIGHT EASY STAGES

---

by John D. Rateliff  
and Skip Williams

illustrated by Jim Holloway

---

## Designing truly unique PCs with the new **PLAYER'S OPTION™** rules

**T**he new character creation system offered in the *PLAYER'S OPTION™: Skills & Powers* book opens up the door to customizing characters to a degree never before possible in the AD&D® game. Unfortunately, the sheer range of options has baffled some players, making them reluctant to give the unfamiliar new system a trial.

Curious about the benefits *Skills & Powers* offers but unsure where to begin? Relax. We'll show you how to design just about any character you want in eight steps.

### A Few General Points

The *Skills & Powers* book is best thought of as a bundle of options, not one seamless whole. It's an anthology of short stories, not a novel. To use another metaphor, this rulebook is a smorgasbord from which players are expected to pick and choose, adopting the options they find appealing, ignoring those they dislike. As with any new thing, it'll take some trial and error for a gaming group to sort out which rules they find useful and which ones aren't for them.

Don't be afraid to experiment, and don't be afraid to skip sections or chapters that don't appeal to your style of play.

The *Skills & Powers* book is intended to fit as smoothly as possible within the existing AD&D 2nd Edition rules. Just as *Unearthed Arcana* added new options to

the original AD&D game, the *PLAYER'S OPTION* books expand the current game in new directions. It's not a new game, but a new take on a classic. Thus *Skills & Powers* keeps the standard races and character classes but allows great variation within those boundaries (sword-wielding mages, humans who can spot secret doors, and fighters who roll d12s for hit points are just a few examples). The *Skills & Powers* book stretches the limits of the game, but it's the same game nonetheless.

With these points in mind, let us begin. Here are the eight steps:

1. Decide on a character concept.
2. Generate ability scores.
3. Assign or generate ability subscores and determine any bonuses and penalties.
4. Choose racial abilities.
5. Choose character class abilities.
6. Choose a kit (if desired).
7. Choose nonweapon proficiencies, traits, and disadvantages.
8. Choose weapon proficiencies.

Still with us? Good. Let's begin at the beginning: with the character concept.



## Step 1: Character Concept

Few AD&D game players are so enamored of chaos theory that they simply play whatever character they happen to roll up. Most begin with an idea of the kind of character they want to play and create a PC accordingly. The whole PLAYER'S OPTION system is designed with these players in mind, to enable them to craft a PC to their liking.

For example, let us suppose that Jack wants to create a Skills & Powers player character for a new AD&D campaign a friend of his is starting up. After talking with the DM to find out more about the setting, he decides to play either a wizard or a halfling. Chatting with his fellow players, he finds that another intends to play a wizard, so he opts for the halfling. Just to be different, he decides the halfling will be a fighter, not the thief most would expect. He names his character "Mr. Sime," after a favorite turn-of-the-century fantasy artist.

If you're looking for a little help with a character concept, the first chapter of Skills & Powers offers some sample backgrounds to help you get thinking about what might have led your character to take up an adventuring career.

In any case, having a clear idea about the kind of character you want, including the character's class, race, and general capabilities, will help your decision making once you begin creating your unique character.

## Step 2: Generate Ability Scores

Once you've arrived at a character concept, it's time to create the bare bones of the character: the ability scores. The Player's Handbook offers six methods for doing this. Chapter Two in the Skills & Powers book adds four more, for a total of 10. These range from simply rolling

three six-sided dice six times and writing down the results in the traditional order (Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma) to starting with 75 points and dividing them however the player pleases among the six abilities. Let's assume that our player, Jack, chooses his favorite method (Method V) and rolls 4d6 six times, discarding the lowest die each time, then assigning the results to the abilities he chooses (keeping in mind that he wants to play a clever fighter). He rolls unusually well and winds up with the following scores: Strength 15, Dexterity 16, Constitution 16, Intelligence 14, Wisdom 10, Charisma 10.

## Step 3: Assign or Generate Subability Scores

The next step is to use the ability scores to create subabilities. One of the greatest departures of Skills & Powers from the standard AD&D system lies in the concept of subabilities. Essentially, the book postulates that a character's ability score is the average of two separate fac-

tors Just as "IQ" in the real world is the average of problem-solving, memory skills, and other elements, "Intelligence" in the game is now considered to be the average of Reason (problem solving or thinking) and Knowledge (memory).

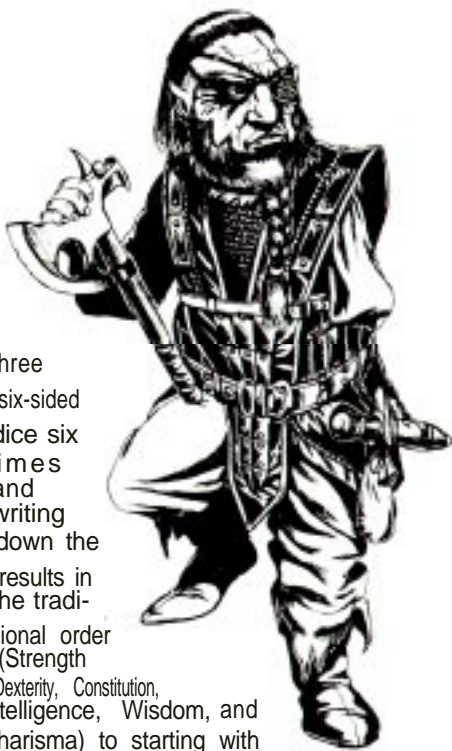
The two subabilities cannot normally be farther than 4 points apart, and the average of the two subabilities should equal the original ability score. In no event can a score exceed 19. Thus, if a character has an ability score of 12, one subability can be as low as 10 and the other as high as 14  $[(10+14)/2=12]$ . The chief exception to this rule comes when the player spends character points to raise one subability by a point (see step four below for an example). Note that subabilities cannot violate racial limits.

The book allows players to randomly generate subabilities, but doing so robs the player of choice.

Here's how Jack subdivides Mr. Sime's ability scores:

<b>Str</b>	<b>15</b>	Stamina	13
		Muscle	17
<b>Dex</b>	<b>16</b>	Aim	16
		Balance	16
<b>Con</b>	<b>16</b>	Health	14
		Fitness	18
<b>Int</b>	<b>14</b>	Reason	12
		Knowledge	16
<b>Wis</b>	<b>10</b>	Intuition	9
		Willpower	11
<b>Chr</b>	<b>10</b>	Leadership	8
		Appearance	12

A quick look at the rules for subabilities (in Chapter Three), reveals that some of these subabilities are more valuable than others. In general, though, which eggs go in which baskets depends upon the character concept. Since Mr. Sime is neither a wizard nor a cleric, Reason and Intuition grant him fewer game benefits



than, say, Knowledge (with its extra non-weapon proficiency slots). As a halfling, he probably won't be his party's main load-carrier; hence to him Muscle (which increases his combat effectiveness) is more valuable than Stamina. Both Aim and Balance are equally beneficial, so he chooses to keep both scores equally high.

Once Jack has adjusted the various subabilities to his liking and written down all the benefits and penalties they bring, he's ready to go on to the next step.

## Step 4: Choose Racial Abilities

At this point, a new concept — character points — enters the equation. Here's where it's easy to get confused: the *Skills & Powers* book doesn't give players a set number of points from which to build characters. Instead, the player chooses what race, class, etc. he wants the character to be: each option comes with its own allotment of points that the player can use to fine-tune abilities within that option (to determine which racial or class skills the character has). Some races receive more points than others; for example, elves receive 45 points for racial abilities, while humans receive only 10.

Why not give everybody the same number of character points?

First, remember that this is not a new game. It's a way to give players more choices when working within the AD&D game's class and race framework.

Second, and most important, some races and character classes already have built-in game benefits. Human fighters receive the smallest allotment of character points because humans already enjoy unlimited advancement in all classes while fighters have the best attack rolls, weapon selection, Armor Class, hit points, etc. in the game. These are free

benefits that fall outside the character point system.

A final important point to note about character points: You don't get all your points at once. Instead, you get several groups of points. You get some points for racial abilities, some for class abilities, some for nonweapon proficiencies, and some for weapon proficiencies. It's possible to save a few points at each stage to spend later, but the reverse is not true: you can't "borrow" points from a later stage to spend now (no deficit spending here!). Think of character points as obeying their own kind of gravity; they can never move "upstream," only in the direction of the flow. Usually, only a token number (typically 5 points) can be carried over; the rest are "use or lose."

To return to our example: since Jack has already decided that Mr. Sime is a halfling, he first applies the standard halfling adjustments to his ability scores (-1 Str, +1 Dex), raising his character's Dexterity to 17 and lowering the Strength to 14. The related subabilities have to be altered as well to reflect this change: Jack decides to make Mr. Sime's Stamina 12 and his Muscle 16; he sets both Dexterity subabilities (Aim and Balance) at 17, adjusting the relevant bonuses.

Now it's time to decide on the racial abilities. Jack looks at Chapter Three and notes that, as a halfling, Mr. Sime gets an allotment of 35 points to spend on racial abilities. Jack can choose the standard Stout or Talfellow abilities "package" (at a cost of 35 points for either) or the Hairfoot package (cost: 30 points, with 5 points left over to save or spend for an additional ability), or he can reject the standard packets and create a customized halfling. Consulting the list on pages 33-34 of *Skills & Powers*, he decides on the latter (atta boy, Jack), and chooses the following racial abilities:



- . infravision with a 30' range (cost, 5 points)
- . a +1 bonus to attacks with missile weapons (cost, 5 points)
- . +1 to his Balance subability (cost, 10 points)
- . the ability to detect secret doors like an elf (cost, 5 points)
- . the standard halfling bonuses to saving throws (vs. spells, poison, and rods/wands/staves; cost, 10 points).

Jack has spent all 35 points he has available at this stage, but he could have given up one ability and saved 5 points to spend later on. Mr. Sime's Balance score now rises to 18; Jack marks the change on his sheet, adjusting the Armor Class and initiative bonuses at the same time.



## Step 5: Choose Class Abilities

Ever since Step One, most players will have had a pretty good idea of what character class they want to play, and they will have arranged the ability scores back in Step Two with that specific class in mind. Now it's time to fine-tune the character's concept.

Jack wants to play a little bit against type, so he wants his halfling to be a fighter, not a burglar. According to Chapter Four, fighters receive 15 points for class abilities (whereas wizards get 30 to 40, thieves get 80, and clerics get a whopping 125 points). Looking over the list of goodies on pages 47-48, Jack decides that 15 points is simply not enough, so he looks at the optional restrictions on page 48 and picks out two: limited armor (making Mr. Sime unable to function in anything better than chain mail) and limited weapon selection (he can only use those weapons available to a thief). The limitations net him an extra 10 character points. Note that Mr. Sime's small size

already precludes him from using certain very large weapons, so volunteering to give the full selection of fighter weapons isn't a huge handicap.

Newly armed with a total of 25 points (15 for being a fighter and 10 more for the self-imposed restrictions), Jack copies down on a piece of scrap paper the fighter abilities he'd most like Mr. Sime to have, along with their costs, then whittles his shopping list down to the ones he can actually afford, reluctantly discarding such goodies as 1d12 hit points per level for hit points and multiple specializations. Eventually he chooses the following class abilities:

- 2% magic resistance per level (cost, 10 points)
- spell resistance, granting a +1 bonus to all saving throws vs. spell (cost, 5 points)
- weapon specialization (cost, 5 points)

Jack has spent 20 of the 25 points he has available. He would dearly love Mr. Sime to have poison resistance as well (granting a +1 bonus on all saving throws vs. poison in addition to the bonuses granted Mr. Sime by his racial ability), but skimming ahead has convinced him that he needs some extra points for use later on, so he saves 5 character points from this stage for later use.

## Step 6: Choose a Kit (if Desired)

By and large, the *Skills & Powers* book eliminates the need for kits. After all, kits exist so that players can customize characters, so that not every fighter need be cut out of the same cookie-cutter mold. But with *Skills & Powers*, a player can customize a character far more precisely than the old kits ever could. One halfling burglar may be much like another, but it should be rare for two *Skills & Powers* characters ever to have precisely the same abilities. Still, there are those players who want to squeeze every drop out of any new system, and for those stalwarts the new rulebook devotes the whole of its fifth chapter to detailing 30 kits. Unlike the standard kits described in the PHBR series (*The Complete Fighter's Handbook*, *The Complete Wizard's Handbook*, etc.), these kits cut across character class; a wizard or cleric can be a cavalier as easily as a paladin can. Characters of any class can be assassins or diplomats.

Since Jack views kits as rule-busting abominations except in settings specifically designed to accommodate them (such as the AL-QADIM® setting), he decides to skip this section. Mr. Sime will, he hopes, be a one-of-a-kind character without recourse to a kit.

No character points are assigned at this stage, so Jack isn't missing out on anything.

## Step 7: Choose Nonweapon Proficiencies, Traits, and Disadvantages

The AD&D game's proficiency system originally debuted in 1986's *Dungeoneer's Survival Guide*, by Douglas Niles. Now, as co-author of *Skills & Powers*, Niles has gone back and revamped the system he created nearly a decade ago. The main departure of the *Skills & Powers* non-weapon proficiencies system from the one offered in the core rulebooks is that the chance for success is no longer directly based upon the character's ability scores. Instead, each proficiency has its own base chance for success. A high score in the relevant ability might add a bonus to the proficiency check, just as a high Constitution or Wisdom score provides bonuses against some forms of attack, but the base number will on the average be much lower than under the old system.

The new approach helps check a major abuse of the rules, whereby players assign proficiencies according to their characters' highest scores, insuring a ridiculously high rate of success whenever they attempt to use that skill (far higher than a character of the same level would have with attack rolls or saving throws).

Most proficiencies now have a base score of between 5 and 8 (or, in a few rare cases, 9). A high score in the relevant ability can raise this anywhere from 1-5 points (similarly, a low ability score can lower it by the same number of points, if the player was feckless enough to choose proficiencies for which the character was guaranteed to be inept).

Instead of taking a slot or two, proficiencies now cost character points. Jack looks at Chapter Six and learns that warriors and rogues get 6 character points to spend on proficiencies; wizards and priests get 8 points. Since proficiencies cost from 2-5 points, this allotment just will not go far. Fortunately, character points left over from earlier stages in the character creation process can be



spent now. Characters also get bonus points based on their Knowledge scores (a Knowledge of 8 or below grants one measly point, while a score of 18 in this subability garners the character a whopping 7 points).

What's more, proficiencies have now been joined by two new ways of delineating characters: Traits and Disadvantages. Whereas proficiencies are skills a character learns, traits are inherent characteristics, like sex appeal or keen hearing. Disadvantages, by contrast, are character flaws, like greed, cowardice, or fanaticism. A trait costs points, just like a proficiency, while a disadvantage adds points to your character's pool.

Mr. Sime, as you will recall, is a fighter with a Knowledge score of 16. Checking the tables on page 87 and 17, Jack learns that he has 16 character points to work with: 6 for Sime's being a fighter, +5 for having a high Knowledge subability, plus an additional 5 points carried over from his allotment for class abilities. Once again he skims over the lists of options and concludes that the number of points at his disposal is not nearly enough for all the neat proficiencies and traits he wants for his character. He therefore selects two disadvantages: Mr. Sime is colorblind (a rather mild disadvantage, worth only 3 points) and has a severe phobia. Rather than choose one of the phobias listed, with his DM's permission he chooses agoraphobia: Mr. Sime is extremely uneasy in open spaces. Underground or inside a smallish room he can function normally, but must roll half his Willpower or lower on 1d20 (i.e., 6 or less) to do anything more than cower if forced into a large open area. A phobia is normally worth 4 to 8 points if mild and 9 to 14 points if severe; Jack and his DM scan the list to see which phobia is similar in strength and game effect to agoraphobia and decide that since it is the exact opposite of claustrophobia (phobia: enclosed spaces) it should bring the same character point bonus. Mr. Sime's agoraphobia therefore garners him 11 character points.

With his 30 points (6 for being a fighter, +5 for having a Knowledge of 16, +3 for being colorblind, +11 for his severe phobia, +5 carried over from earlier in the character creation process), Jack now assigns his character the following proficiencies and traits:

## Nonweapon Proficiencies

- . Modern Language, illithid. (cost, 2 points; base score 9; adjusted score 12 due to +3 bonus from Knowledge of 16)
- . Rope Use (cost, 2 points; base score 8; adjusted score 12 due to Aim of 17)
- . Etiquette (cost, 2 points; base score 8; no adjustments)
- . Ancient History (cost, 3 points +2 additional points for being in another character class's skill pool; base score 6; adjusted score 9 due to Knowledge of 16)
- . Tumbling (cost 3 points +2 additional points for being in another character class's skill pool; base score 7; adjusted score 11 due to Balance of 18)

## Traits

- . Light Sleeper (cost, 5 points)
- . Obscure Knowledge (cost, 4 points)
- . Ambidextrous (cost, 4 points)

(Note that due to a misprint in the first printing of the *Skills & Powers* rulebook, the point cost for Traits on page 92 is mistakenly labeled as "Initial Rating." Traits, unlike proficiencies, have no rating or die roll.)

## Disadvantages

- . Colorblind (moderate; +3 points)
- . Phobia: agoraphobia (severe; +11 points)

Jack has spent 29 of the 30 points he had available, saving one point for later use.

## Step 8: Choose Weapon Proficiencies

Last of all, we come to weapon proficiencies, which are described in Chapter Seven. At this stage characters gain their last group of character points (8 in Mr. Sime's case, since he is a fighter, +1 point carried over from the last step). Once again, he skims over the options and thinks how best to spend his last 9 points.

As a warrior, each weapon proficiency costs Sime only 2 points (all other character classes must spend 3 points per weapon proficiency). He decides to become proficient in the short sword and the dart. He also takes the armor proficiency, making it easier for him to get around in armor (cutting encumbrance in half). Each of these takes 2 points. With his remaining 3 points, he decides to spe-



cialize in the short sword (cost, 2 points). Finally, with his DM's approval, he spends his final point to acquire the two-weapon fighting style. Because he is a short sword specialist, Mr. Sime normally makes three attacks every two rounds. The ambidexterity trait combined with the two-weapon fighting style allows him to wield a short sword in either hand, gaining one extra attack each round without penalty. For someone who looks like a typical halfling thief (once he hides his chain mail under his cloak). Mr. Sime packs a serious punch. The DM is hesitant to allow such a fighting machine into the game, but quickly thinks up a few nasty surprises (a couple of crossbow specialists using the new statistics for crossbows on page 128 might just ruin Mr. Sime's day).

Jack has spent all the character points he has available. However, Jack could have saved a few points here, too. As it is, Mr. Sime will receive 3 to 5 character

points each time he gains a level (depending on how generous the DM wants to be). Jack can use these points to buy additional weapon and nonweapon proficiencies, turn them into cash, or even use them as "luck points" that might save Mr. Sime's bacon when the dice go bad.

And that, basically, is that. The player has still to equip the character, using the standard *Player's Handbook* rules, figure up the hit points, Armor Class, THACO, and saving throws, and assign an alignment. But these things come easily to anyone who's played AD&D (Jack choses to do something unconventional with his PC's alignment. He decides that Sime, who believes himself to be a reincarnated mind flayer, is lawful evil — clever, civilized, and brave, yet a thoroughly dangerous character all round). *Skills & Powers* also includes a chapter describing a new, stripped-down psionics system ("Psionics Lite"), but Mr. Sime is already dangerous enough as he is and Jack decides to give psionics, like kits, a pass.



There you have it: a complete player character ready to adventure. While the example given in this article describes how to create a new character from scratch, the same rules can just as easily be used to translate an existing character. When incorporating these new rules into your campaign, work with your DM to see if he thinks your character is unbalanced in terms of the NPCs and other PCs. Don't be afraid to experiment, and don't be afraid to adjust a character or even go back and start over if you don't get it right the first time. There's a lot of great role-playing potential in the *Skills & Powers* rules; use them in whatever way makes for a great game.

*John Rateliff and Skip Williams are inmates at TSR, Inc. John is an editor (and occasional game designer) and holds a Ph.D. in fantasy, with a special interest in Tolkien and Lord Dunsany. Skip is author of the popular Sage Advice column, and the designer of the upcoming Rod of Seven Parts adventure. Skip was also a member of the PLAYER's OPTION design team.*

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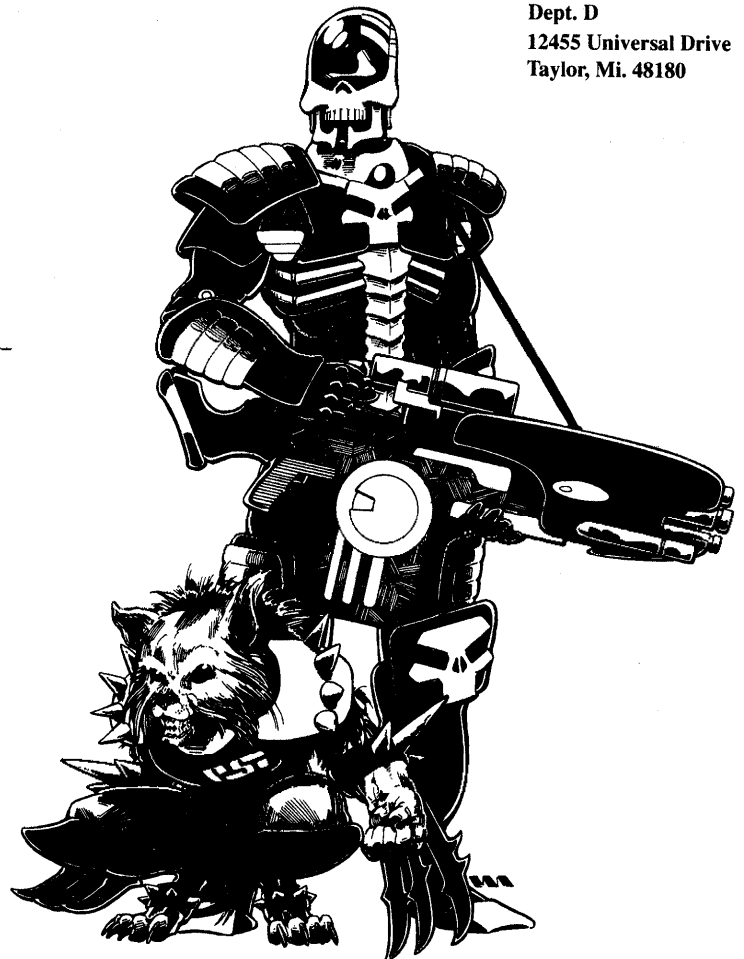
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# Some PCs have skeletons in their closets

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by Fraser Sherman

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illustrated by Terry Dykstra

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## Secret Origins and Motivations of Player Characters



*"Why did I leave my home?" Aelrya, the half-elf set down the wineskin, glaring at Stephen. "I have no home: my father seduced my mother through magic, then abandoned her to die in the gutter. If it takes five centuries, I'm going to find my father —" Her hand fell to her sword hilt. "— and fulfill my mother's last request."*

*"And all I wanted was, uh, money," Stephen said nervously. "My town called me a thief and a son of a thief — but when I return loaded down with jewels, gold, and magic, Marion will — er, that is, everyone will look at me differently. What about you, Cyril?"*

*"I'm sorry, what?" Cyril hadn't been listening; beyond the camp, in the wood, he could swear he'd heard the padding footfalls of the One Who Follows...*

The AD&D® game has come a long way since *Dungeon Masters* could just tell players that their characters met in a tavern and decided to journey together to seek their fortunes. Today players are encouraged to flesh out their PCs with colorful cultures, specialized class-kits, and personality types; so why not do the same with their motivations, the spark that sets them on the adventuring road? Players can work with their DM to find a motive that fits both the PC and the game (some of these backgrounds will affect the game, so the DM must have a say).

## Reasons for Leaving

### Family

PCs don't always get along with their families. In some cases, the friction is bad enough to drive him off. Imagine being the only rogue in a family of paladins and priests; why stick around? What if the character is not the black sheep in the family but the white sheep, awakened by a priest or mentor as to how corrupt and evil his family's deeds are? The PC may flee out of shame, or his family may cast him out.

The PC may go adventuring out of love for his family. He could be seeking enough money to save them from ruin, looking for a long-lost brother — or simply wanting to stand on his own where nobody knows him ("If I receive my knighthood here, I'll always worry it was out of respect for you, Mother, not for me.").

### Love and Marriage

What better motive to drive a PC to heroism than romance? Like Stephen, such a PC is madly in love and believes money or a hero's reputation will melt his true love's heart (of course, as one *DRAGON® Magazine* article noted, that doesn't mean the PC has to be heroic — he only has to look heroic).

The lover in many folk tales has to fulfill a specific quest before winning his lover. The ancient Welsh love story of Culhwch and Olwen has Culhwch seeking out over 30 items his prospective father-in-law requires before a wedding can take place.

Alternatively, the PC may be running *from* marriage, not *toward* it, fleeing the loveless match his parents arranged; Robert E. Howard's *Dark Agnes* series started out that way.

### Wealth

Almost every PC wants to get rich, but for some money is only a stepping-stone to what they really desire. It may be something tangible — a love potion, a *ring of djinni summoning*, the resurrection of a childhood friend — or it may be a dream; the PC is convinced money will let her gain society's respect, buy back

the family estates, or avenge herself on the lord who dishonored her.

### Curses

With this motivation, a PC hits the road in hopes of finding a cure for some terrible curse ("The Black Doom will take me in five years if I don't return the Scepter of Skulls to the tomb Grandfather stole it from!"). Perhaps he is running from the unpleasant consequences of some previous action.

Leaving home may enable the PC to escape the curse. In Gilbert and Sullivan's comic opera *Ruddigore*, the hero ran away to sea to avoid inheriting the Barony of Ruddigore — for whoever becomes the Black Baronet must do an evil deed a day or die in agony. The curse in Joseph Payne Brennan's "The Horror of Chilton Castle" is that when the head of the family dies, his body becomes lunch for an immortal, insane ancestor. With perks like these, what high-born PC wouldn't want to forsake his family and head out adventuring?

### Revenge

Revenge is a classic motivator. The avenging PC will travel the world to hunt down the one who betrayed his regiment, enslaved his sister, or murdered his mentor. The character may know where to find him, and is seeking a way to destroy him.

### On the Lam

This is the gaming version of joining the French Foreign Legion. One of the best ways to elude pursuers is to go adventuring. The PC may be wanted by the law, hunted by the clergy, or sought by assassins and bounty hunters.

His pursuers could be family. The thief PC's paladin brother could be trying to erase the stain on their family name. Using the curse described above, the next-in-line for the PC's title may be determined the PC — not he — will suffer the curse.

Keep in mind that being accused doesn't mean being guilty; like Dr. Kimble in *The Fugitive*, the PC may have been framed for a crime he didn't commit. If so, he'll want not only to stay ahead of his hunters but also to track down whoever really did the deed.

### Mystery

The PC has a question or riddle and goes adventuring to find the answers. It could be some prophecy about his fate, a blank spot in family history ("Did my father really betray the king at the battle of Nighting Field?") or a cryptic riddle ("The last words on my teacher's lips were 'coronet blue' — I'll never rest until I understand why he whispered them to me.")

### Amnesia

This is actually the ultimate mystery.

The PC has no memory of who he is, except vague hints—a picture of someone's face, a remembered phrase or image ("In my dreams, I see a golem in a tall tower, ringing a golden bell."). Although he possesses all class-related skills, he has no idea where he learned them or from whom (as he acquires added nonweapon proficiencies with levels, he may simply discover that he already knows how to do something). This could be interesting for the DM, as well.

### Tragedy

A shaman or beast-rider finds his tribe massacred. A prince discovers his uncle has murdered the king and married the



queen (sound familiar?). An orphan's treacherous guardian steals the family fortune and throws him out into the snow. Events like this leave the PC scarred and shaken. Unlike the avengers, such characters don't want to get even; rather, they're simply desperate to put the scene of their tragedy behind them any way they can.

### Shame

PCs want to travel as far as they can from anyone who knows about some great humiliation. For example, a paladin who failed his deity on his first mission and is now a common warrior doesn't want people to know his roots; an erstwhile thug has become a devout priest. This also works for anyone who's violated a major taboo of his faith or culture ("I killed and ate my horse to stay alive; as a Lishari nomad, I should have died to save the horse.").

A PC could also be ashamed not for himself but for his family, who are all slaves, untouchables, prostitutes, or something else he'd rather forget about. The PC may simply never mention his past, or he could fabricate one to try to pass himself off as a man of breeding and taste, never letting on to his low-class origins.

## Origins and Personalities

Some of the character handbooks (*The Complete Fighter's Handbook*, *The Complete Wizard's Handbook*, etc.) describe personality types for the different character classes. Combining these personalities with the backgrounds here can give a PC added role-playing potential. Be careful, though. A misanthropic druid is hardly likely to have winning true love as a motivation; a naive, neophyte wizard wouldn't be credible as the victim of tragedy.

Other personality and origin combinations will work perfectly. A mercenary wizard's motive is, by definition, wealth (though what he wants the money for is an open question); a brooding warrior is perfectly suited to being under a curse or fleeing a tragedy.

Don't overlook the potential of seemingly inconsistent matches. In movies this is called "casting against type." A merry showoff warrior may adopt his attitude precisely because he's under a curse ("Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow I die — and if not tomorrow, certainly by Thursday."). An intimidating wizard's commanding manner may cover up some secret shame in his past.

## Use in Play

Most DMs have their own ideas and vision for a game. Once it's set up that a PC is seeking his long-lost father or the *Orb of Curse-Breaking*, where does that leave the DM's goals? How do you accommodate a PC's personal mission on a weekly basis, especially if several PCs have their own, different goals?

In a one-shot game or a module, this isn't a problem; with a little rewriting, a PC's background can fit the adventure at hand (perhaps the bandit leader is the man she's been seeking vengeance on for years, or the treasure includes the lost talisman her family was cursed for losing). Alternatively, a DM could build an adventure around the PCs having a common origin: perhaps they are hunting down the general who betrayed their army.

In a long-running campaign, DMs and players first need to decide if the PC's motivation affects the game at all. Fleeing an arranged marriage gives a PC a reason to leave home, but it's not very likely to be a recurring plot element or to

affect the course of the game (except in the way it shapes the PC's attitudes towards love, marriage, and family). Other motivations, like seeking wealth, fit with almost any adventure.

If the PC is lifting a curse, running from assassins, or tracking down a one-armed man, it involves more work for the DM, but he shouldn't feel obligated to incorporate the PC's quest into every session. Let the PC check over his shoulder for assassins at every stop; they needn't show up more than once in a while, ideally at the worst possible moment.

Even if the DM doesn't advance these quests, players can use their motivations to keep their PCs busy during down time: ducking the constabulary, asking innkeepers if any strangers have passed by, or haunting libraries for clues. DMs can also use false clues or hints to steer PCs in a particular direction: a rumor that a PC's long-lost father entered the ruins of Madmoor Keep can send the party willingly into your new dungeon.

Eventually, of course, the PC should have a chance to attain his goal — an opportunity to clear his name, lift the curse, become even richer than he imagined. Then what?

If the player's leaving the group, this is a great opportunity to send his PC off with a bang. If he's staying, the PCs may stay together out of friendship, or the PC's success can steer the group in a new direction ("This gold will raise an army to overthrow the tyrant of Nightmare Valley — will you fight for freedom with me?").

It's a character's life we're talking about here.



*Fraser Sherman lives in Fort Walton Beach, Florida.*



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# CAST OF CHARACTERS



In campaigns set in TSR worlds, it is easy to place a fictional setting based on Indian culture. Indian adventures might work in places like Hepmonaland in the **WORLD OF GREYHAWK®** campaign, Sri Raji in **RAVENLOFT®**, and the Savage Coast of **RED STEEL®**. In the **FORGOTTEN REALMS®** setting, places like Suj, Kelazzan, Durpar, and Calimport can be made into approximations of India, which could also have its own subcontinent near Zakhara. Wherever it is placed, the climate must be tropical or subtropical and near a vast expanse of water. The real India contains snowcapped mountains and raging rivers, as well as arid deserts and barren floodplains.

Life in the historical India was governed for centuries by a system of “castes” (*jatis*), hereditary groups limited to those of the same social class, occupation, and societal interactions. Bakers were from different castes than morticians, who were never from the same circles as kings. For game purposes, this structure can be treated as a variant of the already extant character class system. It is similar in a way to the usage of “class” in the *Oriental Adventures* campaigns. What this means is that in the first example below, a character would be a fighter/Singh kit.

Historically, castes determined who people could marry or associate with, what they could do or eat, and how they treated (and were treated by) others. Playing classes similarly could prove interesting. For example, a Fakir PC who rebuffs a Brahmin PC may be subject to ostracism by the rest of the party and any near-by NPCs.

Despite rigid NPC separation of classes, characters from different classes may form associations (*sabhas*) for specific purposes, such as adventuring. The DM should give freedom to players who want to form varied associations, unless he wants something really exotic, like an all-Yogi campaign.

These classes are determined from the start of the campaign, and cannot be changed. Dual- and multi-classed characters also are impossible. If one does change class, it results in a loss of three levels; PCs should be loath to divert from their lot in life. (At least the player can choose his class at the start of the campaign.)

All classes except the cleric and druid should be allowed in an Indian campaign. The four super-class groups here are *jawan* (warrior), *babu* (wizard), *pundit* (priest) and *sansi* (rogue). The kits below should not be considered to be the only ones available for these classes. Indeed, most of the kits in the complete handbook series should be allowed. The kits below are designed for humans, but because of reincarnation (see *Legends & Lore*, page 126) the DM may allow demi-humans to take any of these kits as well. Importantly, the reincarnation options in *Legends & Lore* include humanoids, so it is not unthinkable to have even a kobold paladin under these rules.

The kits below use the proficiency system; the DM can decide secondary skills if used instead. Weapon proficiencies should allow the weapons in “Rhino’s Armor, Tiger’s Claws” in *DRAGON® Magazine* issue #189. The descriptions discuss a “poverty option,” reflecting the vast need in India. If a character selects this option, he begins with no gold pieces (“rupees”) and only minimal equipment such as a Singh’s sword or a Swami’s focus item. In return, the character gets a bonus proficiency from this list: agriculture, alertness\*, animal handling, begging\*, [any] craft proficiency, cooking, dancing, endurance, fishing, gaming, herbalism, hunting, local history, looting\*, religion, singing, swimming. (Proficiencies marked with an asterisk are from *The Complete Thief’s Handbook*.)

Combining the following new character kits with related spells and magic weapons (to follow in upcoming issues) can add a new level to your game.

## Singh (Fighter kit)

*The battle against Rajah Zail had soured with the arrival of the juggernaut. Singh Akbar Abdur winced as the grind of stone on stone drowned the screams of his brother warriors. Their weapons could not penetrate the marble elephant’s stone hide, and Akbar knew his sword would cut no deeper. But the Rajah on top of the elephant, ah, he could feel the bite of a lion-warrior’s talwar. Brushing his hair from his eyes, Akbar leapt in the juggernaut’s path and let out a roar that even a stone elephant could hear.*

**Description:** Singhs are warriors who view themselves as lions personified. They always serve a high-ranking person, institution, or government. Singhs are among the proudest of warriors, serving in armies or other groups of fighters. The noblest moment in a Singh’s life is the defeat of a major threat to his master, such as killing an evil spirit stalking his lord. Death is anticipated in service, though Singhs are not expected to welcome its embrace.

Singhs are the quintessential disciplinarians. They encourage cleverness in strategy. Singhs are notoriously close-mouthed in the company of higher-level Singhs or other classes that are “above” them. Singhs are fascinated by technology and magic, and they can integrate most items into war strategies. They never cut their hair or beards, taking strength from their leonine appearance.

The player and Dungeon Master must decide who or what the Singh serves. If the character serves a noble lord or in an army, his interaction with non-Singhs may be limited. The DM must ensure that the character can be integrated into a mixed party.

**Class role:** Most classes show honor to the Singhs; but ultimately Singhs are thought of as servants, no matter how high their rank. Singhs are accorded the deference their masters deserve; thus, a Singh serving a rajah will be treated as an extension of the rajah. Singhs may eat any meat but beef, and they may marry anyone.

Singhs defend their masters. They form the basis of armies for rajahs and other nobles. Advancement is hierarchically based on service. The highest Singhs are called *tanadars*, roughly equivalent to generals. In wartime, Singhs serve the military, but in peacetime, they use their skills in other trades. Many Singhs have businesses in crafts, science, and transportation.

**Minimum requirements:** Strength and Intelligence of 11. Almost all Singhs are male, though female Singhs might be interesting and could be useful to their tanadars. This kit may be taken by dwarves.

**Weapon proficiencies:** Usually any except razor, though his superior officer may have his own requirements.

**Nonweapon proficiencies:** *Bonus:* endurance and riding (land-based). *Required:* One business or technology proficiency. *Recommended:* armorer, blind-fighting, carpentry, cobbling, engineering (two slots required only), leatherworking, rope use, spellcraft, weaponsmithing, weaving. *Forbidden:* grooming.

**Equipment:** A Singh may buy what he wants, though his superiors may make him buy certain items.

**Special benefits:** A Singh gets one free weapon specialization in a weapon employed in his military life. This may be anything from sword to catapult. The Singh also gets the benefits of having a military hierarchy or patron. The DM must decide what these benefits are, but they should include room and board.

At 4th level, the Singh gets the ability to roar (treat as the 4th-level wizard spell *shout*). Opponents seeing and hearing a roaring Singh must make immediate Morale Checks unless their

force is clearly superior. This ability is only available as long as the Singh has not cut his hair since reaching the age of manhood; once this occurs, the Singh's ability to roar is lost.

**Special hindrances:** The Singh's army or patron makes constant demands. He may be called at a moment's notice to fight a far-off opponent or to guard his patron in danger. The Singh cannot always control his battle strategy. Even if of higher level than his commander, he may not change his assigned tactics.

**Wealth options:** Poverty option or 5d4x10 rupees.

## Kshatriya (Indian paladin)

*Who stood between Kshatriya Jumna Padras and death? Only himself, he knew, yet it was hard to ignore the rakshasa maharajah before him. The two could not harm each other, could not even touch each other. The rakshasa blocked the exit from the newly defiled temple, laughing as it bombarded Kshatriya Padras with unnatural imagery. His subjects could not help him now. Faith, and only faith, would give him release. Kshatriya Padras began to pray.*

**Description:** Kshatriyas are the ruling class of holy warriors. They constitute the Rajput princes who administer India. In theory at least, they rule all things secular, but they rule nothing divine. Thus, they may order religious services, but they cannot perform them; they can build temples but cannot open their doors.

Kshatriyas are high nobles and are respected by all. The princes are rajahs and rare kings are maharajahs. Though all are lawful and good, they often face off over regional differences or personal bickering. Like all paladins, however, Kshatriyas are united in defending the faith from threats external and internal.

Kshatriyas do not have to govern an area, but they must be in a position to rule under a logical set of circumstances. If the DM does not want a PC ruling a city-state, the PC may be a brother, son, relative, or dispossessed heir to a rajah, maharaja, or other ruler.

**Class role:** Though they rule most of India, they are socially subordinate to the Brahmin priests. Kshatriyas provide for civil defense, enforcement of the social system, and scheduling of religious festivals. Kshatriyas may marry only someone from Kshatriya and Brahmin circles. They may eat meat but not beef. They often wear symbols of their principedoms or deities.

In crises, Kshatriyas are expected to provide positive moral leadership. For some, this means leading troops into battle or facing powerful foes alone; however, Kshatriyas concerned with stability rarely will place themselves in mortal danger.

**Minimum requirements:** Standard ability requirements. Most Kshatriya warriors are male, but several noteworthy ones have been princesses (*ranis*). Kshatriyas may come from outside Kshatriya families if they become rulers and otherwise qualify.

**Weapon proficiencies:** Any.

**Nonweapon proficiencies:** *Bonus:* Etiquette. *Required:* Bureaucracy\*. *Recommended:* Animal handling, endurance, heraldry, languages, law\*, oratory\*, reading/writing, religion, riding, spellcraft. *Forbidden:* [All] crafts, diagnostics\*, healing, herbalism. (Proficiencies marked by an asterisk are from *The Complete Paladin's Handbook*.)

**Equipment:** Because of their station, Kshatriyas must have only the best equipment money can buy. All equipment must cost at least 150% book value. Those who rule must have items of at least 300% book value.

**Bonded mount:** Options may include horses, elephants, rhinoceri, blackbuck antelope, axis deer, sambar elk, gaur oxen, Brahma bulls, camels, lions, leopards, tigers, varaha boar, griffon, hippogriffs, baluchitheriums, and (for females) unicorns. (For some of these, see articles on mounts in *DRAGON Magazine* issues #177 and #190.) They must undertake public hunts for bonded mounts, which will resist capture. If a mount escapes the Kshatriya and his Shikaris, the Kshatriya is shamed; his reaction bonus is lost until a mount is attained.

**Special benefits:** All Kshatriyas are treated very well by those who follow Indian culture. A ruling Kshatriya gains +3 to reactions. Rulers have vast wealth and power to raise taxes, build temples and wage war. Most of a ruling Kshatriya's wealth will be tied up in properties irrelevant to adventuring, but the DM should allow the Kshatriya leeway in getting what he needs. All have access to soma-juice (see *Legends & Lore*, p. 132). The Kshatriya may have servants of any alignment.

At 3rd level, the Kshatriya gains the power to detect karma, determining a being's karma points (see *Legends & Lore*, p. 126); for characters having non-Indian kits, level or hit dice is learned. Targets are allowed saving throws vs. spells to

avoid having their karma read.

**Special hindrances:** Kshatriyas who rule are preoccupied by matters of state and cannot make arbitrary changes in established patterns of life. They must support the entire Brahmin class, tithing at least 20% of their wealth. Also, if a Kshatriya loses his wealth or is shamed, his reaction bonus is lost.

With the prohibition on religious activity, a Kshatriya is not able to lay on hands or *cure disease*. A high-level Kshatriya has access to the Charm, Divination, Law, and Protection Spheres.

**Wealth options:** This must be decided by the Dungeon Master. Except in cases of disinheritance, the poverty option is forbidden.

## Shikari (Indian ranger)

*Shikari Lashkar Khan stood perfectly still; so still the icy wind chose to bend around him rather than ruffle a single garment. He was as one with the snow leopard, the silent predator of the Himalayas. Lashkar slowly breathed in the mountain breeze, and visions of tearing into an Alpine ibex filled his thoughts. The smell of death was in the air, and the hunt was on.*

**Description:** The Shikaris are the big game hunters in a land where the natural beasts are as deadly as the magical ones. They lead the hunt (*shikar*) for elephants, tigers, and other such creatures. They are often as at home in the courts of rajahs as they are in the dark wilderness. A Shikari's greatest challenge is an impossible hunt, such as tracking the uncapturable king-monkey Mahakapi-Jataka. Every Shikari has such a goal, and knows it is the striving for and not the attainment of the goal that matters.

Shikaris often lead huge hunting parties through difficult terrain. Hunts can go on for months, especially for prize creatures such as Kshatriyas' bonded mounts. If a Shikari serves a Kshatriya or other noble, the hunt can include dozens or even hundreds of participants. Often the hardest part of such a hunt is to bring back the animal alive rather than dead. Shikaris occasionally are asked to find more than animals, such as tracking a vicious band of Thugs or finding a maharajah's kidnapped daughter.

**Class role:** The kit is not socially ranked very high, but it often serves very high-class characters. Shikaris may be in the employ of powerful persons, or they may hire out their services to all comers.

**Minimum requirements:** Intelligence of 13 in addition to other standard

requirements. Shikaris can be of any alignment and are not penalized for un-good acts. This kit may be taken by elves and half-elves.

**Primary terrain:** Any Indian terrain, from mountains to plains.

**Weapon proficiencies:** One must be appropriate to the hunted species (see below), such as an elephant goad or tiger's claws.

**Nonweapon proficiencies:** *Bonus:* Hunting, tracking. *Required:* Animal lore, trail signs\*. *Recommended:* Alertness\*, animal handling, bowyer/fletcher, camouflage\*, distance sense\*, elephant care (see below), endurance, etiquette, falconry\*, foraging\*, herbalism, mountaineering, observation\*, riding, rope use, set snares, survival, weather sense, *Forbidden:* Agriculture. (Proficiencies marked by an asterisk are from *The Complete Ranger's Handbook*.)

**Equipment:** The Shikari may carry anything he thinks he may need. Shikaris almost never wear armor heavier than studded leather.

**Special benefits:** instead of a species enemy, a Shikari has a hunted species that he specializes in hunting. This species must be Semi-intelligent or less, including animals under the Kshatriya mount listing plus birds, sharks, and other creatures. The Shikari gets +4 on proficiency 'checks and attack rolls vs. this species.

At 4th level, Shikaris gain the ability to freeze. The Shikari stands perfectly still and enters a medi-

tative state. During this state, which can last one hour per level, the Shikari appears to be under

a *feign death* effect, though magic can detect life signs. All senses are heightened, allowing scenting and long distance hearing of prey. If animals or humans come within 10 yards per level of the Shikari, he gets an immediate tracking roll to uncover the location.

**Special hindrances:** Shikari followers are always other shikaris, though a shikari may have one animal follower that can go on hunts; falcons might make good hunting companions, but wild boars would not. Shikaris gain no advantage by building anything but may have servants, hirelings and so forth at any level.

Every Shikari has a major target which would be considered nearly impossible. Every species has at least one divine avatar, and so the avatar of the Shikari's hunted species is his quest. (These can be equivalent to the animal lords of PLANESCAPE™, or perhaps the Nehwonian Cults of the Beast in *Legends & Lore*.) Whenever the Shikari discovers a track of such an avatar, he must pursue it regardless of consequences. They are unlikely ever to catch their species avatars, unless the gods deem it important.

**Wealth options:** Poverty option or 5d4x10 rupees. Shikaris are never paid well even by royalty and thus may not accumulate monetary treasure. They may live well, however.

## Swami (Wizard kit)

*"Do not break the circle!" Swami Usha commanded the gathering around the crystal. She started to speak in tongues, drawing gasps of awe from those present, but this was only a delay. Something was blocking her projection to the anger-chamber of the spirit princes, something so terrifying that she could not bring herself to see it. But in her mind, Usha felt the presence of the darkest of spirit princes. She could not win here. With a tear, Usha broke the circle herself condemning the spirit princes to a thousand lifetimes of rage. Somewhere, chill laughter beckoned.*

**Description:** The Swami is an Indian diviner-summoner specialist who uses a focusing object to reach the spirit world. The Swami has a limited ability

to predict the future through these spirit connections and can often learn the fates of those who have passed on. Some Swamis can even make contact with the gods through their art, though the Brahmins object to this. Most often, though, the Swami is occupied with tending to the needs of those who seek knowledge denied to them by men. For a price, the Swami shows them a glimpse of the spirit world.

The Swami receives spells through meditative manipulation of spirits on the spirit demi-plane. Unlike the gens of Zakharan sha'irs, Indian spirits are always evil and hostile. They never part voluntarily with spells, and they promise revenge on any Swami who takes their magic away. The Swami must bend the spirits to his will, but if he is not careful the spirits will turn on him.

**Class role:** The Swami social class is of moderate importance, with its wealth sometimes being higher than its place in society. Swamis occasionally work for nobles, but most are freelance. Swamis can eat anything they want and can marry anyone they want.

**Minimum requirements:** Constitution and Wisdom scores of at least 15. Swamis may be male or female, though few female Swamis are well paid. Swamis may be of any alignment; more than a few are unscrupulous.

**Specialist schools:** Divination, Con-juration/Summoning. The bonus spell per level can be of either school. The Chance To Learn Spell is +15% for these schools and -15% for all others.

**Barred schools:** Necromancy.

**Weapon proficiencies:** Dagger, knife, dart, or tiger's claws.

**Nonweapon proficiencies:** *Bonus:* Chanting\*. *Required:* Spellcraft. *Recommended:* Acting, ancient history, astrology, fortune-telling\*, gem cutting, languages (ancient), local history, reading/writing, religion, ventriloquism. *Forbidden:* None. (Proficiencies marked with an asterisk are from *The Complete Bard's Handbook* and *The Complete Thief's Handbook*.)

**Equipment:** The Swami must spend at least 100 gp on a crystal ball, gem, bone, or other focus. The focus can handle spells of a level equal to one level per 100 gp value. If the poverty option is taken, the Swami may use any object for spells of up to 2nd level.

**Special benefits:** The Swami uses his focus as his spell repository instead of a spellbook. The focus can hold a number of spells equal to the Maximum Spells Per Level as determined by the Swami's



Intelligence. While scanning the spirit world through the focus, the Swami will come across many spirits who control spells; it takes one hour per spell level to find a specific spirit. Assuming he is of adequate level, the Swami may try to engage a spirit in a simple magical combat. If the Swami makes a Chance to Learn Spell roll modified by -5% per spell level, the spirit and its spell are imprisoned in the focus permanently. If he fails the roll, however, the spirit retaliates. The Swami makes a Wisdom check at -1 per spell level, falling into unconsciousness for one hour per spell level if failed. Thereafter, the Swami may try to capture the spell again, but each subsequent attempt is at -5% cumulative chance of success to get that spell.

The Swami can use his focus as a spell conduit, being able to send spells into it. He can send any spell with a range greater than zero to the limits of his ability to see. If using spells like *clairvoyance*, the Swami can even send *fireballs* miles away. The focus can be magicked with any number of spells. He can transfer spells from one focus into another but may have only one at a time.

**Special hindrances:** The focus is vulnerable to attempts to break it; it gets no bonuses on the Item Saving Throw table. It will shatter if a spell is captured that is of a level greater than the focus' gold piece value can allow. If it is broken, the enraged spirits flee the material world with all the Swami's spells, but not before

making one last attack on the Swami wherever he is. At that point the Swami must make a Wisdom check at -1 per level of the highest level spell in the focus, or fall into a nightmare-tormented coma for a number of hours equal to the total of all the spell levels formerly imprisoned. A high-level Swami had better have friends around if this happens, as the coma can last for days.

The Swami cannot use spells from spellbooks or Wizard scrolls without using a spirit-summoned read magic spell, and he can never memorize spells from such items.

**Wealth options:** Poverty option or 10d4x10 rupees.

## Brahmin (Priest kit)

*"I have forsaken my home!" shouted Bruhmin Prabhut Bhabani to the winds. "I have forsaken my parents! I have no relation to anyone! I stand as a mirror before you, though your reflection is imperfect. I stand alone before the sacred fire and am ready to accept that loneliness!" There Brahmin Bhabani stood for hours, alone with the wind until he felt he could stand no more. On the fringe of his vision, he at last saw a man standing, the ground fur below him. Silent, Brahmin Bhabani bowed his head and stood in the presence of the lord of air.*

**Description:** Historically the Brahmins represented the highest caste in India. In the AD&D® game, the noble priestly class

is above even the potent maharajahs; the Brahmins are the loneliest of all. Their assigned task is to interpret the sacred writings of the gods. They supervise birth, marriage, and cremation. High-level Brahmins are usually the only people to have direct contact with devas and avatars, who give them their spells. They are the only ones allowed by society to receive and impart divine visions. Of course, priests outside this class believe otherwise, but this is not sanctioned by Brahmin-run society. No matter which gods they worship, the Brahmins almost never come into conflict with each other on religious grounds.

Given their assigned preoccupation with religion, Brahmins are prohibited from all matters political. As the gods want Brahmins unburdened by secular matters, they wield no actual power beyond the religious. Due to the tithes paid by the Kshatriyas, the Brahmins are the wealthiest class, even above the Kshatriyas and merchants. However, Brahmins must tithe 50% of their wealth to their temples. Thus, even if a group of Brahmins had the hubris to assert control over a Kshatriya, they would not have the resources to do so. Still, they are perceived as at least a symbolic check on the worst tendencies of the ruling Kshatriyas.

**Class role:** The Brahmins supervise all things religious, though they are dependent upon the Kshatriya for their livelihood. Except in specific associations, the

# NEW INDIAN NONWEAPON PROFICIENCIES

## Elephant Care

**Warrior, 2 slots, Intelligence**

The science of prolonging elephant life (*nastayurveda*) is a necessity when dealing with these expensive beasts who don't take well to captivity. This proficiency combines animal handling, animal lore, and herbalism, as they pertain to pachyderms. Unless someone with this proficiency makes successful proficiency checks weekly, an elephant has a 10% chance every year of contracting a fatal disease. One with this proficiency can tend many elephants and related animals like hippopotami and rhinoceri.

## Explosive Energy

**Psionist or Ascetic (*Legends & Lore*, p. 125), 1 slot, Wisdom**

This proficiency lets a devotee summon from within an amazing burst of energy (*tiliana*). If a proficiency check is failed, the character collapses for 1d3 rounds. If successful, he adds 5 points to both his Strength and Dexterity for 1d6 rounds. During this time, he must expend the energy in combat or otherwise exhaust himself through physical exertion. No rest is allowed, nor are soft blows or defensive

action. When the duration elapses, the character must make another check or fall unconscious for 2d6 rounds; otherwise he must cease all exertive activity for that period.

## Mudra Sign Language

**Rogue, Priest, 1 slot, Dexterity**

This system of thousands of dancing hand signals and body movements forms a complex unspoken language. For example, there are 36 poses of the eyes and 22 of the neck and head. Thugs, thieves, dancers, and Brahmins often use this to communicate as they would with any other language.

## Sword Swallowing

**Rogue, 1 slot, Dexterity**

This proficiency allows the player character to manipulate his mouth and throat to accept long and pointed objects like swords. The sword swallower also can swallow fire and do other muscle-related tricks with his throat. The character gains +2 on saving throws against ingested poison because his throat reflexes are improved.

Brahmins eat, sleep, marry, and die with each other. Some Brahmin women marry high-ranking Kshatriyas, but male Brahmins who take up the priesthood are forbidden from marriage until they reach 5th level, Brahmins never eat meat of any kind and do not eat food prepared by a non-Brahmin. In fact, except in religious ceremonies, Brahmins never allow themselves to be touched by any but Kshatriyas or other Brahmins. They always wear single-color robes and have shaved heads.

**Minimum requirements:** Charisma of 14. In most cases priestly Brahmins must be male, but some deities allow female Brahmins.

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Varies by deity. See Legends & Lore.

**Nonweapon proficiencies:** *Bonus:* Chanting\*, reading/writing and one artistic proficiency. *Required:* Religion, poetry\*. *Recommended:* [All] arts, ancient history, cooking, craft instrument\*, crowd working\*, diagnostics\*, etiquette, healing, herbalism, local history, oratory\*, spellcraft, *Forbidden:* Bureaucracy\*, law\*. (Proficiencies marked by an asterisk are from *The Complete Bard's Handbook* and *The Complete Paladin's Handbook*.)

**Equipment:** Any, but the Brahmin's goods must come from Brahmins, so must cost at least 150% book value.

**Special benefits:** The Brahmin has powers as noted for each deity in *Legends & Lore*. The Brahmin's high social standing gives him a +3 to reactions in societies based on India; other societies will recognize the Brahmin's position by his bearing and react at +1. He has access to any temple's acolytes and shelter wherever he wants.

A Brahmin also has a detect spirits ability to see whether a being is extraplanar. If the creature is disguising its origins, it gets a saving throw vs. spells. This power even works on avatars, though their saving throws are quite good.

**Special hindrances:** Brahmins are forbidden to take food or goods from non-Brahmins, though anyone can donate to the temple. Thus, if a Brahmin priest is starving and cannot speak the language of a heathen benefactor, he will succumb to malnutrition. Brahmins must keep clean and drink soma-juice to avoid disease, because otherwise they succumb to the pollution of those around them. A Brahmin who does not observe strict cleaning rituals has a 5% chance per week of contracting a disease.

**Wealth options:** The poverty option is usually forbidden, though the DM may

make special circumstances. Usually at least 3d6x10 rupees.

## Thug (Rogue kit)

*Something was in the bushes with Sepahee, so he fell back from the road. Cautiously, as if it knew malevolence was near, a four-horned chousingha antelope crept out and then darted into the woods to Sepahee's right. Sepahee smiled. The antelope was a propitious omen—for him, at least. Those in the oncoming bullock-cart would not find it so propitious, Sepahee swore, as he knotted his strangling cord and dedicated their blood to his deity...*

**Description:** Unlike their more profit-minded descendants in the kit section of *The Complete Thief's Handbook*, Indian thugs are ritual stranglers, practiced killers serving their deity. The AD&D rogue kit based on these remorseless killers should be limited to NPCs.

Thugs are ruled by omens (see below) and rewarded for plentiful sacrifice. A few times a year, huge groups of Thugs go on *thuggee*, a murderous pilgrimage. On *thuggee*, they kill any traveler they meet, provided omens are right; failing to kill such a traveler, they fear, brings divine wrath upon them. They employ deceit in murder and rarely attack larger groups. They stake out favored places for murder, usually in areas of solitude and soft

ground. When omens sour, the band turns back, the *thuggee* expedition over.

Thugs are also called *phansigars*, or "noosemen," due to their use of strangling cords. They use cords (*rumals*) to avoid shedding blood, though they can use sharp weapons if they like. In *thuggee*, more experienced Thugs use the *rumal*, while lesser Thugs kick at noosed victims. Thugs bury victims using blessed pickaxes. Bodies are buried face down and disfigured to blur identification.

**Class role:** Thugs are outside the normal social system and are despised by everyone in society, even thieves. Thugs subsist off plunder and raise their children (and sometimes captured children) in service to their calling. They are self-sufficient and sometimes secretly work with the more unscrupulous members of society. A Thug who attacks a member of another band will start a bloody war, but bands are much more likely to work together for mutual gain.

**Minimum requirements:** Strength and Dexterity of 11. Thugs are chaotic evil and male; women occasionally participate in Thug attacks as decoys and lures, but they never engage in physical combat.

**Skill progression:** A Thug must put at least 40 of his 1st-level points into moving silently and hiding in shadows.

**Weapon proficiencies:** The Thug's initial choices must be *rumal* and martial

THUGGEE OMENS AND THEIR MEANINGS	
Omens	Effect
Dropped pickaxe; turban set afire; donkey comes from front; snake in front or back; meet protected traveler (woman, carpenter, oil-vendor, fakir, blind or crippled man, dancer, washerman, poet, musician, smith, sweeper, bard, leper, pilgrim or one who sneezes) or corpse soon after leaving home	Turn back; -3 to hit till heeded
Travelers contain protected traveler; jackal, kite or wolf cries at night; dog shakes head	Do not kill; -3 to hit
Pregnant woman carrying water met; donkey brays on left then right; call of lizard (very rare)	Great luck; +2 to hit
Fair or festival; marriage; woman bearing water; donkey brays on right; jackal passes from right or antelope from left; raven on road; deer herd met (will meet Thugs); hare calls on left; cats fight in evening; crow or partridge on left; owl or jay on right; kite cries in day on right	Good luck; +1 to hit
Jackal passes on left; wolf passes or cries at night; hare in front or calls on right; antelope crosses on right; cats fight day or night; crow or partridge on right; owl or jay on left; kite cries in day on left	Bad luck; -1 to hit
Victims not buried; turban falls off; woman met with empty pitcher; donkey brays on left; jackal cry at night; two jackals cross path; snake seen; lizard falls; eating animals in first week; drinking milk	Very bad luck; -2 to hit
Killing women; being captured; sparing victims with good omens	Betrayal; -3 permanently



arts (the latter being from *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*). The Thug gets a bonus proficiency in pickaxe (horseman's pick), but blessed pickaxes cannot be used in combat. After 1st level, a Thug may choose any weapon (talwars, tiger's claws, and daggers are common) or specialize in martial arts.

The rumal can be up to 20' long and worn as a turban. The last 5' are doubled to form a loop, with a knot at the doubling point and a slipknot 18" beyond. The noose is tossed around the victim's neck and the knots are pulled together, allowing the user to pull the victim to ground with an overbearing attack at +2. The user looses the slipknot and pulls tighter, causing 1d6+2 hp damage per round and requiring the victim to make a Constitution check to avoid unconsciousness. The victim is at -2 to hit, but a successful attack from the victim breaks the hold. Only users with a Strength of 17 or greater, or 4th level and beyond, can use a rumal alone. Otherwise two users must use the same rumal; they must both hit for the attack to be successful.

**Nonweapon proficiencies:** *Bonus:* Rope use. *Required:* Disguise, trailing\*. *Recommended:* Alertness\*, animal noise\*, blind-fighting, forgery, jumping, local history, mudra sign language (see below),

reading lips, religion, set snares, tightrope walking, tracking, tumbling, ventriloquism. *Forbidden:* Begging\*. (Proficiencies marked with an asterisk are from *The Complete Thief's Handbook*.)

**Equipment:** Very little. First level Thugs are allowed only basic subsistence and few items above their rumals and pickaxes.

**Special benefits and hindrances:** The Thug is ruled by omens that affect his attack rolls on thuggee. See chart.

**Wealth options:** Poverty is mandatory at 1st level. Plunder is divided among the Thugs with leaders getting two shares each, murderers getting one and a half each, and others getting one.

### Fakir (Bard kit)

*Hunath knew he almost had these outlanders. The breath of fire, the bed of nails, the rope to nowhere—these simple illusions were the gods' work to these ash-faced northern invaders. Now he drew forth from his turban a pungy flute and on it played a spellbinding melody to entrance the serpent before him. With the forces of the Rajah circling back on the invaders, he hoped to entrance these serpents from the north for crucial moments. "Play on, Hunath!" he thought to himself "Your countrymen depend on you, so play on!"*

**Description:** Fakirs are wonder-working entertainers who rely on their skills to win food and coins from strangers. They can be found in marketplaces, smoke-houses or anywhere they can find benefactors. They are often master showmen, though wealthy persons often find them to be irritants. Their magic may seem mere conjury compared to that of Swamis, but woe betide those who anger Fakirs. They often credit their work to the gods, but only a few mean it.

Fakirs play instruments as do Western bards. They specialize in flashy magic, as there is rarely anything subtle about a Fakir. They almost never receive enough money to do anything but entertain for food; though many high-level Fakirs could do whatever they wanted with their skills, few leave the art of fakirism. Fakirs sometimes have alliances with thieves, Swamis, and even Brahmins.

**Class role:** Very low, hardly above panhandlers. However, a few Fakirs rise in society, usually in service to a Kshatriya or Swami.

**Minimum requirements:** Standard in all respects. Fakirs can be of any gender and alignment, though reputation is important, more so than anything else.

**Weapon proficiencies:** Any. Fakirs sometimes work weapons into their acts; swords, daggers, lassoes, and so on can work here.

**Nonweapon proficiencies:** *Bonus:* Crowd working\* plus one of musical instrument, singing, or dancing. *Required:* Begging\*, spellcraft (see below). *Recommended:* Acting\*, animal training, appraising, artistic ability, chanting\*, craft instrument\*, fast-talking\*, languages, local history, rope use, sword swallowing (see below), ventriloquism. *Forbidden:* Intimidation\*. (Proficiencies marked with an asterisk are from *The Complete Bard's Handbook* and *The Complete Thief's Handbook*.)

The Fakir gets his choice of instruments, among them the *sitar*, the *pungi* nose flute, the *narsinga* curved trumpet, the 19-stringed *bina* guitar, the bowed *sarod* lute, the *sarangi* violin, the tambourine, the *tandava* and *tabla* drums, the *shruti* harmonium, or the *vina* zither. Instead, the Fakir may choose to sing ragas or dance in any number of styles.

**Equipment:** A Fakir can have no apparent equipment except instruments and magic when working to receive benefactions.

**Special benefits:** The Fakir has the Jongleur's ability to entertain the crowd; after the Fakir performs for 1d10 rounds,

all viewers must make a saving throw vs. paralyzation or have their reactions adjusted one step friendlier. He also has the ability to inspire benefactions; the combination of skill and poverty requires anyone with money to make a Wisdom check or be compelled to donate some of it to the Fakir. He also has the Charlatan's ability to detect fakery: If the Fakir attempting to detect lies or swindling makes a Charisma check, he realizes the nature of any deception.

Fakirs need no spellbooks, instead having a unique ability called "spell mimicry." When a Fakir watches a caster use a wizard spell of a level he can use, he can make a Chance to Learn Spell roll. If successful, the Fakir can memorize the spell from then on. However, if a month passes between uses of a spell in an act, he forgets it. The uses of *rope trick* and *phantasmal force* may be obvious, but *protection from evil* might be harder to work in. Once a Fakir's maximum spells for a level is reached, he can learn no new spells. The Fakir cannot choose to forget a spell to make room for another.

The Fakir also rarely needs material components. When a component crucial to a spell is required, the Fakir can substitute something cheap. For example, instead of the 5,000 gp in powdered diamond for a *wall of force*, the Fakir uses colored powder. Use good judgement; a building is still needed for *guards and wards*.

**Special hindrances:** Fakirs lack the abilities to rally allies, counter song effects, or identify magic items. They do not have access to the read languages ability. They attract no followers, cannot build strongholds, and cannot use written magical devices.

**Wealth options:** Poverty is mandatory at 1st level. The Fakir cannot have wealth showing when using his special abilities.

## Yogi (Psionicist class)

"There is no rain," Yogi Sulubut Jung instructed his students, though the monsoon bore down with great force. "There is no heat. There is only you." Yogi Jung's students stood against the elements as long as they could, but all soon sought shelter from the storm. Yet in it all sat the Yogi, quietly humming under his breath. His eldest student craned against the wind to hear the Yogi's words. "There is no rain," the old man repeated, and though the student felt the pounding from the sky, he was forced to agree.

**Description:** Yogis are masters of the karmic discipline of yoga, a demanding physical and psychic regimen. Yoga is an ascetic focus for those striving for perfection of the inner self. Though members of nearly any class and social level can study yoga, only Yogis can truly harness their inner strength. Yogis are known to be able to contort their bodies into impossible positions, walk on hot coals, sleep on beds of nails, even transport themselves to other planes and change shape. In theory at least, the will is the only limit to power.

Yogis must be ascetic (*Legends & Lore*, p. 125), abandoning pursuit of all other goals. Pleasures of the flesh-treasure, sex, wine, even soaps and scents-must be eschewed. They use psionic arts, not mage spells as do other ascetics, but the goal is the same: at 20th level, the Yogi will achieve oneness with all and must be retired from play. This concentration does not mean complete disavowal of society; a Yogi can participate in associations with those of other classes and social levels and even go on adventures so long as meditation is not ignored. Yogis even can kill if necessary, though they are not allowed to take pleasure from combat.

**Class role:** Yogis are viewed as outside of and superior to the conventional class and social system. Meat, marriage, holding property, and political power-all are forbidden to the Yogi. Yogis have only one responsibility: to achieve oneness. Some teach that goal, though they cannot have reached it if still mortal.

**Minimum requirements:** Dexterity of 15. All yogis must be lawful, and by 5th level all must become lawful neutral. Yogis suffer no penalties for alignment shifts toward lawful neutral.

**Preferred disciplines:** The Yogi's primary discipline must be psychometabolism. Thereafter he may choose any discipline.

**Recommended devotions:** Adrenalin control, all-round vision, astral projection, biofeedback, body control, body equilibrium, cell adjustment, dimension walk, enhanced strength, heightened senses, immovability, inertial barrier, mind over body, spirit sense, suspend animation, [all] telepathic defense modes.

**Recommended sciences:** Aura sight, clairvoyance, complete healing, energy containment, metamorphosis, split personality.

**Weapon proficiencies:** Yogis may learn only unarmed combat.

**Nonweapon proficiencies:** Bonus:

Rejuvenation\*, meditative focus\*. *Required:* Religion. *Recommended:* Agriculture, alertness\*, blind-fighting, cooking, direction sense, endurance, explosive energy (see below), harness subconscious\*, healing, hypnosis\*, jumping, observation\*, survival, tightrope walking, tumbling, weather sense. *Forbidden:* All craft-, technology-, and magic-related proficiencies, plus begging\*, disguise, gaming and intimidation\*. (Proficiencies marked with an asterisk are from *The Complete Psionicist's Handbook* and *The Complete Thief's Handbook*.)

**Equipment:** None. The Yogi must be free of all possessions beyond food, simple clothes and implements, and humble shelter. He may never wear armor or carry weapons. The only magic items a yogi may use are those dealing with achieving greater personal understanding or physical perfection; a *tome of understanding* would be acceptable, but not *gauntlets of ogre power*.

**Special benefits:** The Yogi is capable of stretching his body in amazing ways. He can fit through passages as thin as 6" wide, and receives double Dexterity bonuses on saving throws and Armor Class. The Yogi always functions as if he is under a *free action* spell.

Like all ascetics, at each level a Yogi gains a point of Wisdom, Constitution, or Charisma. The Yogi may not exceed 19, in these abilities. Unlike other ascetics, yogis do not lose Strength.

**Special hindrances:** Yogis can use their powers only on themselves. The Yogi is unable to gain the contact devotion and cannot use any powers on another person. No telepathic attack modes or target-affecting devotions or sciences may ever be learned. The Yogi is allowed to use clairsentient powers such as Aura Sight and Clairvoyance to see others psychically, but not such powers as ESP. Yogis cannot teach such powers to their students.

If a Yogi violates his rules about forgoing pleasures of the flesh, he must meditate for a week or lose his psionic powers.

**Wealth options:** Poverty is mandatory. The Yogi may never accept monetary treasure of any kind.



Michael A. Selinker is a game designer who lives in Seattle, Washington. This is the first of three articles in a series. The second will appear next month. He has written several modules for DUNGEON® Adventures.

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We could, we can, and we shall. We looked at our attendees' needs, what our attendees were asking for, and realized that there is not one convention that caters especially to game masters, that provides opportunities for them to learn tricks of the trade and gain key insights into the uses of different campaign worlds and game systems. There is not one convention that caters especially to convention coordinators, that allows them to meet with industry professionals and to learn tips for making their conventions even better. There is not one convention that caters to club presidents, allowing them to make contacts in the industry which might later benefit their clubs.

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Vinnie Salzillo • Dex Con and Dreamation  
Dee Westman • GEN CON® Game Fair & WINTER FANTASY Convention

## WINTER FANTASY: The Game Master's Convention

# Special Events

## LIVING DEATH™

### Campaign Premier

The Network's newest and most provocative Living setting is LIVING DEATH. This exciting gothic mystery campaign takes place across Gothic Earth, from the popular *Masque of the Red Death* expansion to the RAVENLOFT® setting. Battle the natural and the supernatural as part of a secret society. Two tournaments begin this campaign for sophisticated role-players. Any LIVING DEATH event table can be made a Benefit event by contributing \$5 at the table.

### Special Tournaments

- DRAGON DICE™ Winter Championships: TSR's new expandable dice game
- SPELLFIRE® Tournament: TSR's card game about the AD&D® worlds.
- BLOOD WARS™ Tournament: TSR's PLANESCAPE™ set card game.
- Magic: The Gathering: Need we say more?
- Sim City: Mayfair's city-building card game.
- Highlander: Thunder Castle Games's one-on-one collectible card game.
- Middle Earth: ICE's new collectible card game based on Tolkien's world.
- Dawn Patrol National Championships: Battle through legions of enemies to take home the trophy this year.

### Awards Luncheon and Ceremony

The traditional Network breakfast is now an awards luncheon for all attendees. Come socialize after the last gaming slot and stay for the Awards Ceremony.

The luncheon begins at 1:30 PM Sunday afternoon, and the Awards Ceremony begins at 2:30.

### LIVING CITY™ Interactive: Winter Festival

Come celebrate the new year in RAVENS BLUFF™ with a celebration of LIVING CITY characters. This WINTER FESTIVAL is being sponsored by the Temple of Tymora and the Knight's Council. Planned events include a parade of knights, a joust, open melee competitions, a cliff diving competition, a juggling contest, and many other games and events. The land office will be open to confirm current land ownership and to authorize new land sales. Building inspectors will be on hand to authorize new buildings and reconstruction.

Many merchants will be doing business and the Crescent Moon Inn will be providing refreshments for a small fee. Visit the city courthouse and chat (or

plead) with Judge Rupert T. Hangman. See the City Watch to join up or register your creatures. And bring a gift, as the highlight will be the wedding of Lord Charles Lavergne Blacktree IV to Lady Katherine Marie Moorland. All are invited.

Bring your money, and a painted miniature of your character, to the New Year's Celebration in RAVENS BLUFF, at WINTER FANTASY.

The Interactive runs in Slot 9, Sunday 8 AM-1 PM.

### MGM, Grand Gaming Association Games

MGM, GGA, a Network club of long standing which runs many events at the GEN CON® Game Fair, presents the following events:

- Magic: The Gathering Tournament: slots 2, 4, 6, 8
- Champions Adventure I: slots 2, 5, 9
- Champions Adventure II: slots 3, 6
- AD&D® Visual: slots 1, 4, 7
- Battletech Game: slots 3, 6, 9
- Star Wars Adventure: slots 1, 4, 7
- Advanced Civilization Game: slots 2, 5, 8

### Special Prizes

Win fame and great stuff by claiming the prizes in:

- Gamer Gambit: the player who nets the most wins in Network events gets a special prize
- DM Dare: the DM who runs the most Network events with the best judge scores garners a special prize.
- DM Champion: The highest scoring winner of the Judge Invitational will be named Champion DM and take home a special trophy for a year.
- The competition for the position of Lord Speaker of the Advisory Council of RAVENS BLUFF concludes for LC players. Applicants must play both LIVING CITY events.

### Demos Galore

Look for demonstrations of the latest from FASA, Mayfair, Wizards of the Coast, TSR, and others. All demos will offer RPGA Network Player points for participation.

### Charity Auction

Sunday's auction gives you the chance to pick up some interesting items, including LIVING CITY and LIVING JUNGLE things for your characters. If you want to donate items, contact Network HQ.

## Tournaments

### LIVING CITY™ Benefit

*The Stroke of Midnight*  
by Brian Burr

Calvin's Bell has been stolen. If it rings, hordes of undead sailors will attack the city.



### LIVING CITY Feature

*A Near Death Experience*

by Daniel S. Donnelly

The distinction between life and death can sometimes blur. Grave consequences await those not up to the challenge.

### AD&D® Feature two-round elimination

*Curse of the Will O'Wisp*

by Theron Martin

The sight of will o'wisps on three successive nights heralds a mysterious killer who strikes with impunity in the Awaki Valley.

### AD&D Masters/Grand Masters

*All the Credit*

by Gregory Dreher

The gold shipment for the temple has been stolen, and the king's most trusted people have been called in to retrieve it. This event plays as a Grand Masters in Slot 6. *Members only.*

### AD&D PLAYER'S OPTION™ Battle Royal

*Do or Die*

by Robert Wiese

An artifact from the past threatens to destroy the future of Alenkirth.

### AD&D BIRTHRIGHT™ Special

*The Long Road Home*

by Mark Liberman

Treachery strikes, and the baron must send his heirs to safety.

### LIVING DEATH™ I

*Skinners*

by Lester Smith

American Indian myths tell of men who could don animal skins and transform into animals...

### LIVING DEATH II

*Casting Call*

by David Eckelberry and John Bunnell

Visit Milwaukee this winter, and experience new depths of drama at the newly rebuilt Pabst Theatre.

All Network events are open to members and non-members alike unless otherwise noted. Sign up to judge by completing the grid on the back of the registration form. As a special benefit, judges who commit to three or more slots of judging may pre-register for two World-Builder Seminars!

## LIVING JUNGLE™ Challenge

### *The Golden Child*

by Kevin Melka

Every 100 generations, a child is born with the blood of the ancients. The Simbara tribe had the golden child in their midst, but he is missing.

## LIVING JUNGLE Novice

### *Revenge of the Exile*

by Tom Prusa

A leopard katanga maxim states, "Do not leave an enemy alive or he will surely return and eat you." An adventure for low-level LIVING JUNGLE heroes.

## AD&D Judge Invitational two-round elimination

### *Heroes Three*

by Tom Prusa

Fame and fortune are not always as easy to find as one would think. Everyone plays a character and judges part of the adventure. The best overall judge wins a special prize.

## AD&D Network Clubs

### *Tarn*

by Walt Baas and Steve Theis

The citadel atop the hill normally prevents the lake from flooding the dwarven city of Rockcliff, but something has gone wrong. *Network clubs only.*

## Chill by Mayfair Games

### *Till Death Do You Part*

by Jay Tummelson, Don and Linda Bingle

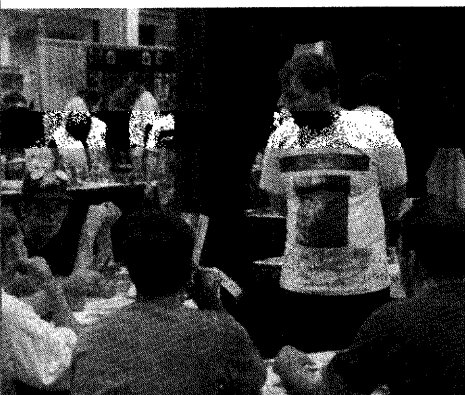
A simple dating service becomes nightmarish, and one of the sufferers is your benefactor.

## Everway by Wizards of the Coast

### *Untitled*

by Wizards of the Coast Staff

The Network's first Everway tournament will show you a new aspect of role-playing, as character creation becomes a main focus of the session.



## Shadowrun by FASA Corp.

### *Something Old, Something New*

by Richard Osterhout

A simple run to collect some things for a shaman becomes much more complex.

## Star Wars by West End Games

### *Sinister Plot on Quercaria*

by David W. Baker

Communications with the Rebel outpost at Quercaria have been out for over six months. A squad is sent in to determine what has happened....

## Underground by Mayfair Games

### *What's Eating Mugsy?*

by Mayfair Staff

Death is no fun. You never know which of your buddies will be the next to find himself taking the big dirt nap...

# Seminars

Join top designers in discussions on the best gaming worlds today. Discover interesting information on the worlds, their histories, and hidden secrets. Delve into the minds of the creators as they expand the worlds. All who attend will walk away with a game product for each world!

Seating is limited to 50 and tickets will be given away six hours before the event. Judges only may pre-register for two seminars.

### *TSR Seminars*

#### It's Good to Be the King

Explore the possibilities of BIRTHRIGHT™ campaigns.

Slot: 2a (Fri. NOON): S1.

#### Realms of Mystery

The FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign setting is explored to its fullest.

Slot: 2b (Fri. 2 PM): S2.

#### Something Wicked...

Dissect the demi-plane of RAVENLOFT® to see what vile and horrible things lie in wait.

Slot: 6a (Sat. NOON): S1.

#### Plane Crazy

Take a ride to the hip and cool PLANESCAPE™ World.

Slot: 6b (Sat. 2 PM): S2.

#### Blacker Than Black

Take a closer look at the new DARK SUN® setting. Better bring your sun glasses as this world heats up.

Slot: 6a (Sat. NOON): S2.

#### AD&D® Game

##### Optional Rules

Learn about the new AD&D PLAYER'S OPTION™ rules.

Slot: 6b (Sat. 12 noon): S1.

#### Dragonrider Blues

The DRAGONLANCE® Saga: where it's been and where it's going.

Slot: 10a (Sun. NOON): S1.

*Plus many seminars from other companies.*

## Convention Planning Seminars

If you have ever wanted to start your own convention, drop in and see how it's done. Join some of the industry's top convention coordinators as they explain the process from start to finish.

### Starting a Game Convention

If you have been wanting to start your own game day or gaming convention, here is your chance to get that vital information that could make your convention. Vinnie Salzillo, Ed Krammer, Gary Smith, Eric Smith, Trella Wilhite, and others.

Slot: 6b (Sat. 2PM): S2.

### Ways to Improve Con Attendance

Learn how to channel your money and effort into marketing avenues that will increase your convention attendance. Learn how to get publicity almost for free. Vinnie Salzillo, Ed Krammer, Gary Smith, Eric Smith, and others.

Slot: 7a (Sat. 4PM): S2.

### Industry Seminars

#### Cyberspace

Join an interactive roundtable discussion dealing with online gaming presented by RPG industry experts. Discuss future possibilities, current issues and topics you want to know about.

Slot: 6a (Sat. 12PM): S2.

### Industry Convention Support

Come and find out what companies will do for your convention or game day. Sign up in the programs that will help you become a major contender. Ken Whitman, Trella Wilhite, Stacy Rieckermann, Gary Smith, and others.

Slot: 8a (Sat. 8PM): S2.

### GM Seminars

Game masters won't want to miss out on these hot educational seminars. Improve your abilities, creativity, and level of fun at all your games. Network members receive Judge points for attending these lectures.

#### GM Fundamentals

Everything from scripting role-playing adventures, to beasts, obstacles, traps, treasures, and breathing life into characters.

Slot: 6b (Sat. 2PM): S1.

#### The Adventure Begins

A how-to on building and running role-playing campaigns.

Slot: 7a (Sat. 4PM): S1.

#### The Complete Game Master

From the art of storytelling to improvisational role-playing and tips, techniques and goodies.

Slot: 8a (Sat. 8PM): S1.

*And still more seminars!*

*More seminars, including World Builders from FASA, Mayfair, and others, will be added.*

# Registration

## Convention Location

The MECCA Center is located at 510 West Kilbourn Avenue in downtown Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

## Dates & Times

Convention	February 9	7:30 AM-12 AM
	February 10	8 AM-12 AM
	February 11	8 AM-4 PM
Exhibit Hall	February 9	10 AM-6 PM
	February 10	10 AM-6 PM
	February 11	10 AM-4 PM

## Admission Policy

WINTER FANTASY™ is open to all. Admission at the door will be \$30 for the weekend or \$15 a day. Discounts will be given to individuals who pre-register with RPGA® headquarters before December 31, 1995.

## Hotel Rates

Reserve your rooms today by calling one of the following hotels in the Milwaukee area. All are within easy walking distance of the MECCA Center.

Holiday Inn	\$56 per night	(414) 273-2950
Hotel Wisconsin	\$30 per night	(414) 271-4900
Hyatt Regency	\$69 per night	(414) 276-1234
Milwaukee Hilton	\$60 per night	(414) 271-7250

## Booking Flights

To get the best rates on flights to Milwaukee, call American Express Travel Services, the convention's official travel agency. With more than 1,700 offices around the world, they can help you with all your travel needs and emergencies.

In addition to arranging special discount rates on Midwest Express, our official airline, the agency can help you with all your travel needs. Call 1 (800) 325-6157, ext. 1, and ask Chris for details.

## WINTER FANTASY™ Game Convention pre-registration application

(This application expires Feb. 1, 1996)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ RPGA Membership No. (if any): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Day Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Evening Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

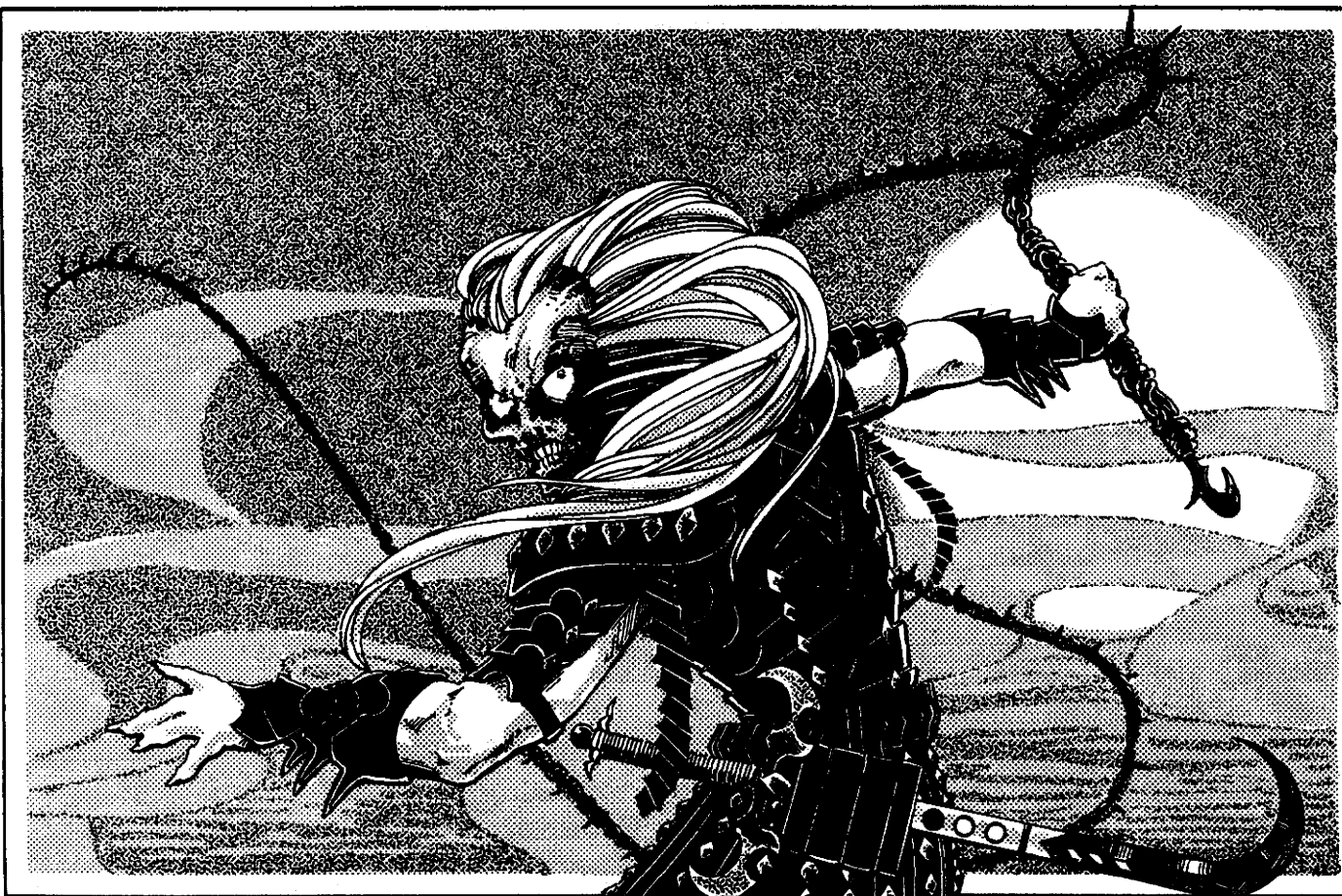
Fees: (\$30 at the door/ \$15 per day at the door)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-registration until December 31, 1995: \$20 | <input type="checkbox"/> LIVING CITY™ Benefit Tournament: \$5 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Registration after December 31, 1995: \$30     | <input type="checkbox"/> Awards Luncheon: \$15                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Judge Registration: \$15                       | Total fees enclosed: \$ _____                                 |

- There are no event fees to play in standard events or to attend seminars and workshops.
- There is limited seating for World-Builder Seminars, so you must have a ticket.
- All payments must be in U.S. Funds. Checks or Money Orders only. Sorry, no cash.

Send this form along with your Check or Money Order to:  
WINTER FANTASY, 201 Sheridan Springs Road, Lake Geneva, WI 53147.  
You can e-mail any questions to: [rpgahq@aol.com](mailto:rpgahq@aol.com)

## WINTER FANTASY: The Game Master's Convention



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## Palladium Books® Presents **Nightspawn™ RPG**

The **Nightspawn™** are characters who discover that they are not entirely human. In fact, they are shape-changers who possess a comparatively frail, human "facade" and a supernatural, superhuman "morphus."

The morphus is said to reflect the character's personality or subconscious fears, desires and self-image. Thus, some are exotic and beautiful, while others (most) are misshapen monsters. No two appear exactly alike and even the most hideous can have the spirit of a saint, while the handsome and beautiful may be evil incarnate. The Nightspawn possess incredible magic and supernatural powers but must transform into monsters to use those powers. This power and their supernatural nature set them even farther apart from the human race.

The world is filled with danger, monsters and enemies, both human and supernatural. In addition to evil and self-serving humans, there are evil Nightspawn, Vampires, the Nightlords, their minions, and other dark forces, all busy building their petty power structures, preying on the weak and innocent, or engaging in foul pursuits. Worse, they are hunted and slaughtered without just cause and without mercy by the *Nightlords* and their minions.

Feared and hunted by humans, the Nightlords, and the forces of evil, the **Nightspawn** are the ultimate anti-heroes who struggle to triumph against all odds!

- The **Nightspawn™ R.C.C.** enables gamers to play supernatural shape-changers. Beings who can appear completely human, but are really superhuman creatures from the twilight dimension known as *Nightlands™*.
- **Nightspawn "talents"** are supernatural and magic abilities of incredible power and range. The only catch, they must shed their human disguise and become a monster to use them.
- Over a dozen other O.C.C.s and R.C.C.s, including the Sorcerer, Mystic, Vampire, Doppelganger and others.
- New magic, psionic abilities and supernatural powers.
- **Nightlords™** and their minions, like the Hunters and Hounds.
- Compatible with the entire Palladium Megaverse®.
- 240 pages; \$19.95 plus \$2.00 for postage and handling, as well as being available at stores everywhere.

## **Between the Shadows™** **Nightspawn™ World Book One**

The world has never been quite the same since *Dark Day*. The day there was no sunrise — no moon or stars for that matter — only absolute darkness and hysteria.

Thousands (perhaps tens of thousands) of people have since discovered another fabric of reality concealed *between the shadows* of the world they once knew. A terrifying world of the supernatural of which they are charter members — they and the **Nightspawn™**.

### **Highlights Include:**

- More information about the shadow world of the **Nightspawn**.
- More details about the **Nightspawn** and **Nightlands**.
- Discover the **Astral Plane** and the **Dreamstream**.
- The **Spook Squad** described in full detail.
- New **Nightspawn Talents**, **Morphus** shapes and data.
- New character classes like the **Astral Mage**.
- New psionic abilities and campaign ideas.
- Written by C.J. Carella. Cover by Martin McKenna.
- 160 pages — \$16.95 plus \$1.50 for postage and handling. Available Now!

## **Nightlands™ — World Book Two**

**Nightlands** is the next sourcebook for the **Nightspawn** RPG; slated for a summer release.

It takes the player into the strange and wondrous **Nightlands**, a twisted mirror image of our reality and home of the **Nightlords**! Discover the true power behind the Ba'al, more minions of the **Nightlords**, the inhabitants of the **Lands of Night**, lost artifacts, new **Nightspawn** talents and morphus, plus campaign and adventure ideas.

Written by C.J. Carella. Art by Post, Martin and others. Anticipated to be 160 pages, with a \$16.95 cover price, but page count and price may change.

**Palladium Books® 12455 Universal Drive Taylor, Mi. 48180**

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by David Clarke

illustrated by Jim Holloway

## Familiar models, like TV characters, add new dimension to your PC.

There is a pattern of “development” for gamers. Initially the emphasis is on cold statistics and success — this is the period in a gamers’ life of hack and slash and Monty Haul. What follows is a transition period, where some mystical force calls them to put down the *long sword +5/+6* vs. *deities* and the barrels of rubies to play the role of a character with Oscar-winning skill.

What is a good role-player? Having watched some of them in action, I would say this: A good role-player is one who can give his character a personality and “life” that are unique, rationalized by his background, consistent, and not based on stereotypes. So how does one become a good role-player? I have a method. Since it’s not easy to learn “personality,” this method focuses on first getting good personalities for the characters that the player can become familiar with easily and play easily. Ultimately, players learn to role-play better and to create their own “good” characters.

Consider the following scene at a campsite on the freezing tundra. Five characters huddle among ancient ruins:

**Dwarf:** I’m sleeping away from the elf.

**Priest:** I’ll pray before I rest.

**Fighter:** I’ll polish my sword during watch.

**Mage:** I quickly glance over my spell book.

**Halfling:** I’m wishing I was back home.

At one time, the above would have passed for role-playing in my campaign. On the surface, the characters’ statements seem appropriate; each character has reacted to the setting in a manner typical to their race or class. The problem for many role-players is moving beyond the stage where their characters are the sum of race, class, alignment and ability scores. Even some veteran players who have never adventured in a “role-rich” campaign may ask, “What else is there?”

The answer is, personality — above and beyond what can be seen on paper. Paladins should be as diverse a group as teachers, and halflings should have only as much in common as do average people in the street. A race or occupation is but a fragment of

one’s personality. Role-playing the stereotype of a fragment is dooming the character to live in one dimension.

Beyond a paper-bound existence, PCs should have hobbies, opinions, attitudes, perspectives, phobias, strengths, and weaknesses. In addition, there should be only a limited connection between the character’s statistics and his personality. For example, a stereotypical trait of thieves is “sneakiness”; but if all the thieves share their traits, there can be no variety.

An excellent list of personality traits, interests, etc. can be found in the back of the original *DUNGEON MASTER®* Guide. Working from this list, intended to help DM’s create NPCs, players can create excellent personalities. Unfortunately, there is no information available on how to role-play “compassionate” or “arrogant,” and some listed traits are far more abstract. There is certainly no guide to playing these traits in conjunction with one another.

For example, consider a human priest who is arrogant, compassionate, interested in fine music and food, boastful, and cowardly. How does this character react to being bullied by ogres, asked for alms by a beggar, or being sent to a frontier settlement? One of the great challenges for role-players is playing a character with consistency. With the above example, however, even a veteran player may have difficulty making a personality gel around those traits.

Many veteran role-players would say the answer lies in the character’s background. Unfortunately, this is the second problem with random trait personalities — or at least it should be, if the background is done right. Background should not only explain what a character was doing before becoming an adventurer or where he’s from, but also why he is who he is. What happened to this priest over the course of his life to cause him to be both arrogant and compassionate? Where did he learn to appreciate fine music and food? As a coward, what does he have to boast about? (In addition, how did he choose his vocation? What type of social, political, or familial environment did he grow up in?) These questions almost seem to

make the situation more confusing, instead of offering explanations.



The solution lies in looking at the problem from the opposite perspective. Instead of starting with traits and building a character, start with a character and pick out traits. I discovered this method by "modeling" my characters on either real people or "media characters." I was playing in a role-intensive campaign and was called upon to create a character quickly. Without telling my fellow players what I was up to, I proceeded to model my character on a friend. I quickly realized how easy the character was to play, and how detailed, consistent, and "alive" she seemed to be. Because I knew the model so well — her views, hobbies, phobias, and overall personality — the character sprang to life within the first few minutes of gaming. My character was quick tempered — even belligerent — but liked to be needed and could be very warm once in a while. She was proud, secretive and rather quiet (except at parties). She loved cats, books, and beer.

Naturally, I wanted to play more characters with such ease and success.

Unfortunately, not every person I knew had a personality compatible with life in a fantasy world, and some of those who did I felt I didn't know well enough. I started basing character on "media models" like Indiana Jones, Ross Perot, even Cookie Monster. One source I stayed away from was traditional fantasy (e.g., J.R.R. Tolkien, Terry Daniels, the Conan movies). Many of the stereotypes I wanted to get away from were based on characters from these sources; after all, who more typifies the wise-wizard-with-a-beard than Gandalf?

A quick word about what makes a good model: the primary attribute is familiarity. Cookie monster made a good model, but if you're not very familiar with him, he won't work well for you. Remember, the purpose of a model is to help you define the character's personality and play him consistently. The second important attribute is uniqueness. A grumpy Detective Fish (Barney Miller) would be pretty close to the stereotype as a dwarf, so what would be the point of using him as a model? A Norm Peterson (Cheers) or Popeye would be much more memorable.

There is the issue of racial tendencies to consider, if only to keep the campaign world consistent. Many official source books describe the races as having somewhat predetermined characteristics, whence the stereotypes arise. That is still no reason why a character could not have any personality you choose. Let all

the other dwarves be dark and brooding, yours could still be David Addison (Moonlighting), dancing, singing, and rhyming his way through life. In fact, going against the grain adds to a character's background because now, the player has to explain why his character is so different. Did he grow in a different racial environment? Is he sane? Cursed? The possibilities for explanation make the character all the more interesting.

Finally, good models are themselves well developed personalities. If the model is one-dimensional or not well detailed in its own setting, it will take a lot of work and ad-libbing to fill the character out.

Media models have more obvious traits that are interesting to play in a fantasy setting. The trade off, however, is that they tend not to be as multi-dimensional as personal models and can be more difficult to play with consistency. Oscar Madison is obviously not too tidy and loves having a good time, but what would he do if begged for help by an elderly man or a voluptuous princess? Cookie Monster likes cookies and isn't too bright, but how brave or cowardly would he be if facing a dragon? These questions must be answered in order for the character to be multi-dimensional and consistent.

One means of answering such questions is within the character's background. Background is often hailed as the salvation of stereotypical, one dimensional characters. The reason two dwarven thieves are not identical (even if they are, statistically) is because one was a prince, a rogue, and a deceiver, exiled for dishonoring his father the king. The other was a slave of neighboring fire giants, who escaped through stealth and dexterity but chose not to return to his homeland. These backgrounds, although not very detailed, are sufficient to explain why the characters chose their class. What is not addressed, something essential for all characters (model-based or not), is an explanation for why the characters are the way they are. Why was the prince a rogue? How did he dishonor his father? How did the former slave acquire great dexterity? How did he survive his enslavement? At what age was he captured? Does he remember a life among dwarves? What effect has wealth or poverty had on these characters? As more traits are revealed and more depth given to the background, it becomes impossible for two characters to have identical personalities. (I once played a

brother and sister who were nearly opposites based solely on their age and, as a result, what each remembered about a past tragedy in their lives.) A good background not only explains where the character is from, but who he is, and why.

Once a complete background that fully explains a character's personality traits is compiled, it becomes much easier to understand the interplay of traits, like those from the back of the original edition of the *DMG*. For example, look again at our human priest. Arrogance, compassion, interest in fine music and food, boastfulness, and cowardice taken together rather aptly describe Major Winchester from *M\*A\*S\*H*. His upper-class background made him arrogant and allowed him to be exposed to intellectual discussion, tastes, and interests. His conceit often leads to boasting, but he often backs down from confrontations, especially with superiors. On occasion he can be quite compassionate, but those moments are rare. The questions posed previously about this character have obvious answers now: he might back down from the ogres (though he thinks they're inferior) and would likely help the beggar. He would despise life in a frontier settlement where he has few of his favorite luxuries. By using models, players learn to play characters consistently, to gain insight into their characters' perspectives and motivation, and to break down personalities into complex and even contradictory traits. In this way, players become better role-players.

The next step is for players to begin creating their own characters without losing too much of the depth and consistency of modeled characters. One way to do this easily is to begin creating characters with a single trait as their focus. To some degree, you may find that some character depth is temporarily lost, as more input from the players is required. This is, however, an important transition step in enabling players to create their own characters from scratch.

A priest who sings, a dwarven thief with a drinking problem, or an old fighter suffering from senility would make a good transitional characters. With a background to explain the character, he is quickly ready for play. The character will gradually gain secondary traits and depth as situations arise that don't correspond directly to the focus trait and cause other traits to emerge spontaneously. It is important that the players be on the lookout for these so as to keep them consistent. As each trait emerges,

the player learns to play it in conjunction with other traits, slowly building toward the “good” character.

Again, there are a few qualities that make a good trait. Familiarity is a factor, but players can’t choose traits they’re unfamiliar with in real life, so it’s a moot point. Instead, the two truly important factors are breadth and weakness. Broad traits are ones that are applicable or visible often. Foolhardiness, arrogance, and paranoia are traits that can be applied to many situations, unlike thriftiness or fear of water. Using a broad trait prevents the need for many secondary traits to cover situations not applicable to the focus trait, and yet will still allow some secondary traits to develop. (I’ve yet to find a trait so broad that it covers every possible situation and prevents secondary traits from surfacing.)

The most important quality the focus trait should have is that it should be a weakness. How hard is it to role-play smart, funny, brave, or outgoing? Everyone has a weakness; so should all characters. Role-playing a character as child-like, obnoxious, foolhardy, or lecherous makes him more interesting and offers a greater challenge to players. This challenge is what gets the creativity flowing and helps the player in the next and final stage.

The “good” character is defined as one whose behavior is consistent but flexible enough to vary from situation to situation. A “good” character should be awash in details such as habits, hobbies, accents, phobias, mannerisms, and numerous other idiosyncrasies; all consistent with the character’s overall personality and background. For example, Griffo, a halfling priest, never does anything to excess except collect maps. His father was a diplomat in an era when the halflings had a weak militia, so he stressed peaceful resolution to problems both at home and at court. For Griffo, the eldest son, he brought maps from all over the known world. His frequent absences, however, forced Griffo to frequently assume charge of the family and be very protective of those he cares about. Nowadays, that protectiveness is especially shown toward the weaker members of the party. He is generally good-natured and open-minded, except when it comes to the rake, Valerius, who once tormented several of Griffo’s companions.

Reuben, a human fighter acquainted with Griffo, is much more child-like. He opens every encounter with barmaids

and bugbears alike by offering pieces of rice candy (which his grandfather used to eat). Growing up with his grandfather (a wise, though slightly senile man) Reuben learned to live life for its wonder and excitement — Gramps always encouraged him to try everything at least once. Reuben’s favorite items are a kaleidoscope, mechanical toy bear, and his eyes of *minute seeing*. Because of his fascination with new things, he is often fearless (or senseless) in battle — fortunately he’s good with the broadsword. He’s actually rather bright (and stemming from his love of games and puzzles an excellent problem-solver), but he usually comes across to strangers as rather dim.

One way of telling whether a character qualifies as “good” is to try describing him either to someone else, or on paper. If you find that you can go on and on, honestly describing the character’s behavior and background, odds are you’ve got a “good” character. Sometimes it’s a good idea to do this — especially with the DM — to ensure that your character is consistent with your characterization. Reuben’s personality has occasionally become dominated by his childlike quality; but by continual review, by and with other players, he never gets to drift too far.

Obviously, the process of creating a good character takes time. For DM’s creating NPCs, then, it becomes prohibitive for all but the most important or frequently met ones. The model or one-trait methods, however, are lifesavers for DMs. A list of models and traits can be made ahead of time on 3 x 5 cards and assigned to shopkeepers, palace guards, and the like as necessary. (I prioritize my list by familiarity, so more influential NPCs get good models, moderately important ones get a trait or mediocre model, and average NPCs have ordinary traits).

The limited roles of many NPCs allow the DM to use models that could never be useful for PCs. The local judge, town drunk, and landlord can use up all the good ideas that couldn’t be filled out enough to create PCs.

Unfortunately, a player creating a new character under this system can be a problem for the DM. For example, new characters starting in my campaign are allowed to start with experience points equal to the lowest of any existing character. (Those most recently created are around 7th level). As a DM then, I’ve allowed players to have a lot of input into what non-magical items their char-

## Model Suggestions

### Fighter (general)

Vampires Lestat and Louis (Anne Rice), X-Men Beast and Wolverine, Archie Bunker, Ross Perot, Cookie Monster, Reverend Jim (*Taxi*), Norm (Cheers), Kane (*Kung-fu*), Barney Fife and Otis Campbell (*Andy Griffith Show*), Jethro (*Beverly Hillbillies*), Elmo (*Sesame Street*), Dirty Harry, Tom (*Legend*)

### Thieves/Assassins

James Bond, Han Solo, Rick (Casablanca), Bart Simpson, Rambo, Carla (Cheers), Captain Ron, the Fairies (Willow), Fletch, Sinbad the Sailor, the Marx Brothers, John Lovitz’s liar character (*Saturday Night Live*)

### Paladins

The Lone Ranger, Batman, Luke Skywalker, Felix Unger (*The Odd Couple*), Popey, Sheriff Andy Taylor/Griffith, Zorro, Lancelot and Bedivere (*Monty Python’s Holy Grail*), Spartacus, Judge Harry Stone (*Night Court*), Fish and Dietrich (*Barney Miller*)

### Priests

Gandhi, Mr. Spock and Dr. McCoy, Ronald Regan, Father Mulcahey, Dr. Winchester and Hawkeye (*M\*A\*S\*H*), Oprah Winfrey, Rush Limbaugh, televangelists

### Wizards

Any Dr. Who, Sherlock Holmes, George Will, the genie (*Aladdin*), Cliff Clavin (Cheers), Grannie (*Beverly Hillbillies*), Ged (Ursula K. Le Guin), Prof. Xavier (*X-Men*)

### Bards

Bugs Bunny, Bob Dylan, Keith Richards, Mork, Bob Hope (*The Road movies*), Dan Fielding (*Night Court*), David Addison (*Moonlighting*), Damiano (*R. A. MacAvoy*)

acter might have, as well as what type of magical items they might be most likely to use.

This sounds awfully generous of me but I use it to encourage role-playing. By giving a mischievous mage a *wand of wonder*, Reuben his eyes of *minute seeing* and a priestess of Horus a gem of *retaliation*, I allow the character to come into existence in my campaign with evidence

of the personality they've supposedly already developed.

This has worked well, but an unexpected side-effect has been players' ideas about their characters. We have dealt with balance-threatening ideas on modification of ability scores, unusual race or class combinations, and more minor ones. The only guidelines I've followed in dealing with such cases are that they are acceptable only if they add to the character's personality and the character does not benefit "statistically" any more than he would have with the unmodified scores, or different race, etc.

For example, the Cookie Monster character originally had S 16; D 10; C 16 I 13; W 9; Ch 7. The player and I agreed to lower Cookie's Intelligence to 6 and increase Strength and Constitution by one point each. The ability scores matched the personality and the character did not benefit (losing seven points and gaining only two). Likewise, all drow characters in my campaign are created with the understanding that they will not have any innate spell abilities. Usually the character is half-drow; this also explains their existence out of the Underdark.

Players' suggestions for modifications

to their characters should be viewed as a sign of interest and creativity on their part. Usually reminding players that they'll be expected to play the character better as a result of a DM's flexibility and that experience will be awarded accordingly is enough to prevent any problem.

In a similar fashion, once players have interesting characters, they may begin to want to alter the campaign world—or at the very least, ask questions the DM is not prepared for. For example, when characters enter a city, they usually look for inns, weaponsmiths, taverns, gem cutters, and the like. In my cities, however, I have to be prepared to answer queries about cartographers, frogs, deep-fried camel-steaks, and "people who smell odd," to name a few. These are examples of the characters fitting into their worlds and your world, and should be seen as very positive signs.

It's a two-way street; you can include a bard playing, "As Time Goes By" to see how the character based on Rick Blaine (*Casablanca*) reacts. He may become enraged and chase after the bard, starting a whole new adventure for the party. In this manner, the party may choose adventures you hadn't intended, such as

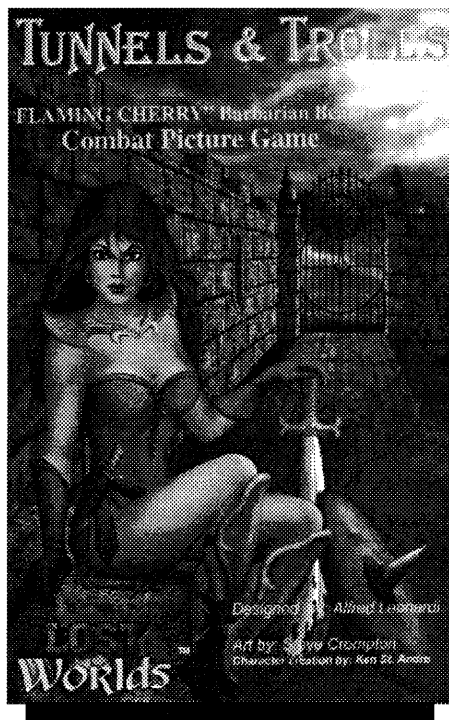
choosing to ignore the rumors about the dragon and its hoard in favor of the rumors of pixies with a large vat of dandelion wine. You may find you have to disguise your adventures if you're a DM who likes to "lead" your party down particular paths. In the end, the players' involvement is a blessing because it takes some of the creative weight off the DM and tells the DM what kind of environments and adventures the players are interested in.

Ultimately, this system has the potential to revolutionize a campaign. Players who longed only to slay and spend may turn their swords into plow shares. Players who couldn't role-play previously certainly would not have enjoyed it, but by learning to take on roles (whether from models, traits, or their own imaginations) may find the game considerably more fun. Likewise, they will have benefitted both by learning to create more interesting characters and also from learning to portray those characters better.



*David Clarke is a high school history teacher who lives in Wisconsin. This is his first sale to DRAGON® Magazine.*

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# Network News

by Scott Douglas

Managing something like the **LIVING CITY™** campaign is a lot like juggling chainsaws; it provides both great entertainment and great risks. Running the **LIVING CITY** campaign is not so different from running a home game; unlike a home campaign, however, I don't get to see all the participants each week. For this reason, regulating character generation is the key to insuring game balance.

**RAVENS BLUFF™**, the **LIVING CITY** is an organic campaign, a setting entirely written, operated, and managed by Network members. It was originally introduced in 1987, and under the guidance of Network members like Jim Ward, Jean Rabe, Skip Williams, Kevin Melka, and Harold Johnson, this small **FORGOTTEN REALMS®** village on the shores of the Dragon Reach has grown to almost 5,000 inhabitants (all player characters created by Network members). At many conventions each year, the city grows and changes, as new characters are created and as members write scenarios for the setting, literally writing the city's history.

Creating a distinctive player character in the **LIVING CITY** isn't difficult, though **LIVING CITY** house rules tend to limit the power of beginning characters. Those rules also limit the number of sourcebooks available to players and judges. These established house rules allow over 4,000 players to make their characters unique, while assuring over 1,000 judges that the campaign is well-balanced.

The **LIVING CITY** was created before the **AD&D®** game's switch to 2nd Edition; as a result, the Comeliness characteristic was originally included, and has been held over as a house rule. Initially, player characters have 84 points to assign among the seven characteristics. Fighter's bonuses for strength are gained only by spending one point for each 10 percent of exceptional strength. Class

minimums and maximums must be obeyed, as per the *Player's Handbook*, but no ability score may be lower than 6 or higher than 18. No racial or age adjustments apply to this system of characteristic point assignment. Characters do, however, acquire a characteristic point or two to add as they attain a new level.

As in most campaigns, characters begin at 1st level. Player characters then have opportunities to accumulate experience and wealth by adventuring in Network-sanctioned **LIVING CITY** tournaments across North America and Hawaii. (How about Europe? Stay tuned to this column for more information.)

To help keep the game's focus positive, characters are limited to good or neutral alignments (however, chaotic neutral is not allowed). Characters may be of human, elven, half-elven, dwarven, gnomish, or halfling racial stock. Duergar, svirfneblin, drow, and wild elves are not permitted.

Starting characters get maximum hit points for first and second levels, half maximum thereafter. In addition, characters begin with maximum gold pieces for their class, and may choose one of a list of select magical items, plus one of a select list of potions. Player characters may choose from a wide variety of listed kits (sorry, no dwarven battleragers or elven bladesingers allowed). With certain restrictions, multi-class and dual-class characters are allowed.

Mages and bards can choose their spells from the *Player's Handbook*, *Tome of Magic*, or *FORGOTTEN REALMS Adventures*. They may gain spells for their book as they gain levels, by finding them during adventures, or by trading with other spellcasters they meet.

Priests may choose non-evil deities from the *FORGOTTEN REALMS* 2nd Edition boxed set, or from the dwarven, elven, gnomish, or halfling pantheons listed in

*Monster Mythology*. The official references for specialty priests abilities are the *Monster Mythology* text and *FORGOTTEN REALMS Adventures* (soon to be rendered obsolete by the new *Faiths and Avatars* tome).

All player characters choose weapon and non-weapon proficiencies as described in the *Player's Handbook*, however, PC fighters are limited to a single weapon specialization. Ambidexterity, two-handed weapon styles, broad weapon groups, and multiple weapon specialization have been found overbalancing in the **LIVING CITY** campaign.

Balance is the key to any successful campaign, and this is particularly true in the **Living City**, where it is impossible for one DM to know everything about every character. Since all tournament adventures and published encounters are written by Network judges and players, The Network's tournament coordinator must take care to see that the combat encounters are adaptable to a well balanced party, a party of six 7th-level fighters, or a party of 1st-level bards. Sound difficult? It seems so, but Network authors work very hard to include a variety of encounter types, while writing scaled combat encounters, so that both high- and low-level parties face appropriate opponents. The tournament coordinator just does a bit more tweaking, to make sure magic items and experience awards are also appropriate to the risk taken.

Participating in the **LIVING CITY** is just one of many benefits offered to Network members. In areas where gaming enthusiasts are sparsely distributed, and where they are thickly bunched, the RPGA Network puts gamers together through tournaments and conventions across the country and around the world.

*Scott Douglas is the RPGA Network coordinator.*

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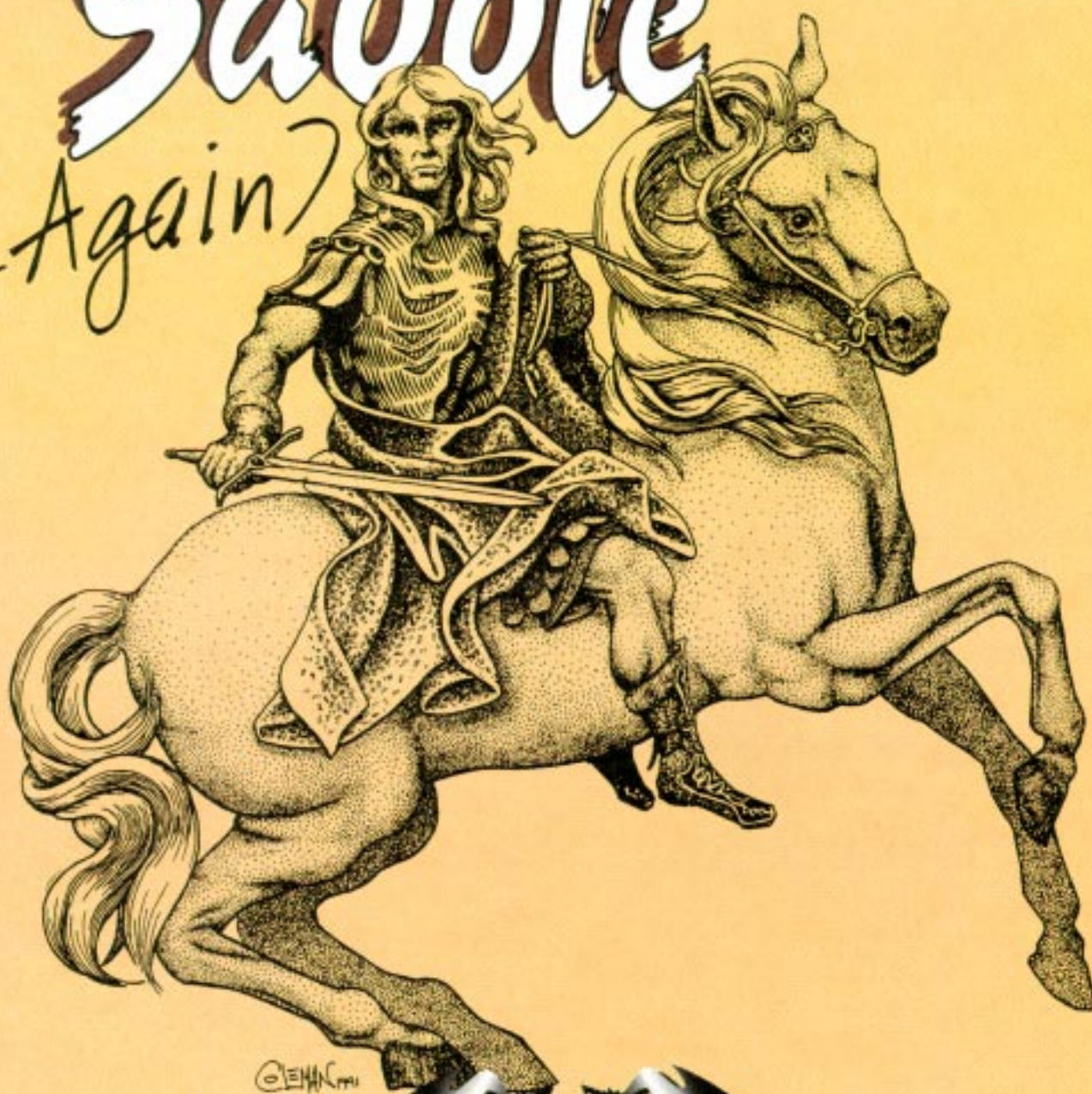
An alternative look at nonweapon proficiencies

# Back in the Saddle

by Clayton R. Beal

illustrated by Jason R. Coleman

(Again?)



The AD&D® 2nd Edition game presents extensive game rules for the inclusion of nonweapon proficiencies (NWP). These rules are further expanded through the *PHBR* series. Indeed, to use these expanded rules almost requires the use of NWPs.

If you don't go for the *PLAYER'S OPTION™: Skills and Powers* book approach to NWPs, you may notice that one problem with the NWP system as it now stands is that it greatly overemphasizes ability scores. The *Player's Handbook* cautions that dazzling ability scores are not necessary for playable characters, yet below-average ability scores make many NWP choices undesirable.

Consider the thief or fighter. Neither class requires high Wisdom scores. Consequently the thief, after pulling off a flawless heist, is unable to make a fast getaway, as riding is a Wisdom-based ability. Or, more discouragingly, a dwarven fighter is unable to operate a mining operation, as it, too, is Wisdom-based (not to mention at a -3 penalty!).

The following system allows all characters to choose proficiencies of their liking, while still rewarding (or penalizing) those characters with exceptional relevant ability scores.

## Acquisition

Characters begin adventuring with the standard number of proficiencies. This number is determined as per Table 34 in the *Player's Handbook*. This may be increased (at the DM's option) by the amount in the "# of Languages" column of the Intelligence Table (*PHB* Table 4). Any proficiency may be chosen, but if it is outside of a character's normal Proficiency Group (Table 38), a penalty must be paid equal to one proficiency slot. Furthermore, if players wish, their characters may choose to specialize in a proficiency (see below).

## Base Proficiency Scores

The greatest departure this optional system takes from the standard rules lies in its adoption of Base Proficiency (BP) scores. Normally, a character's base chance to successfully employ a nonweapon proficiency equals his score in that proficiency's relevant ability. This number may then be modified by other factors.

Under this optional system, all NWPs begin with a base proficiency score of 10. A PC's final BP score can then be determined by applying any of the following modifiers.

The first modifier is based upon the proficiency's relevant ability (RA) score. While this system deemphasizes the dependence of proficiencies on ability scores, it still stands to reason that characters with exceptional abilities should receive higher (or lower, as the case may be) chances of using a specific skill. To determine these modifiers refer to the following table.

### Relevant Ability Modifiers

RA	Modifier
18	+3
16-17	+2
13-15	+1
9-12	0
6-8	-1
4-5	-2
3	-3

The second modifier that may be used to adjust a character's BP score is the check modifier listed for each proficiency (*PHB* Table 37). If the DM chooses to use this modifier, it represents the intrinsic difficulty or simplicity of a skill or proficiency. For example, mining is always a tricky proposition, hence the -3 penalty. Reading and writing, on the other hand, is a fairly simple task once the skill is acquired and therefore bears a +1 bonus.

The last modifier is the experience modifier. This reflects the progression of a character's skill as he learns the tricks of the trade. For PCs, this amounts to receiving a single +1 bonus that may be applied to any one proficiency each time a character gains an experience level. For example, after going through three levels, that dwarven fighter (who runs a mine in the adventuring off-season) would be able to run his mining check with no penalty due to his experience.

The player must choose which proficiency will be modified upon gaining the new level. Unlike proficiency slots, experience modifiers may not be saved from level to level. If they are not used, they are lost.

The player may select any of the character's proficiencies, though ideally it should be a proficiency which was actively used at some time while earning the new level. The only restriction on this choice is that a newly acquired proficiency cannot be chosen. For example, upon gaining third level, a fighter gains both a weapon and nonweapon proficiency in addition to a +1 experience modifier. Desiring to gain some long-range attacking ability, he chooses a short bow for his new weapon proficiency, and the

bowyer/fletcher nonweapon proficiency. At this point, however, the fighter cannot apply the experience modifier to his bowyer/fletcher ability, as this is a newly acquired skill he has yet to exercise. Later experience modifiers may be applied upon gaining subsequent levels.

## NWP Specialization

Like warriors with their favorite weapons, characters may choose to concentrate their studies in a specific area and increase their skills in that field. Unlike weapon specialization, however, any character may specialize in any nonweapon proficiency, regardless of their class. This assumes, of course, characters pay their initial penalty slot for NWPs outside their proficiency group. Note also that characters may choose to specialize in more than one proficiency, and may specialize more than once in the same proficiency.

To specialize, a character need only to "buy" the proficiency a second time. An NWP normally costing two proficiency slots costs another two proficiency slots to specialize. Note that if characters choose to specialize in a proficiency outside of their Proficiency Group, they need not pay the penalty slot again. Once a character has learned the fundamentals of a proficiency, he may always work to refine those skills without penalty.

Specializing in a proficiency increases that skill's base proficiency score. The first specialization increases the BP score to 13, which then may be modified as detailed above. Should the DM allow it, characters may opt to continue to specialize. A second specialization would further raise that BP score to 15. Subsequent specializations would only result in an increase of one to the BP score, making such endeavors impractical in most cases. (See "Extended Specialization" below.)

## Example

Keloran the fighter has an Intelligence score of 14 and a Wisdom score of 10. Keloran chooses to start out his adventuring career with the leatherworking and fire-building proficiencies. Though unusual for a man of his trade, he also chooses the healing proficiency.

Keloran starts with three NWP slots as is customary for warriors. To this he may add four slots because of his high Intelligence (*PHB*, Table 4). One of these slots he spends on fire-building; another he spends on the leatherworking proficiency.

To acquire the healing proficiency, Keloran must first expend his penalty slot for choosing outside of his proficiency group. Next, he must purchase the proficiency itself (at a cost of two proficiency slots). This leaves two slots. Keloran chooses to specialize in healing, so he expends his last two proficiency slots to acquire this specialization.

Note that if Keloran had chosen not to specialize in healing, but instead wanted the herbalism proficiency, he could not have taken it at this time. For the herbalism proficiency, he would have needed three proficiency slots (one penalty and two for the cost of the proficiency).

Keloran could have saved his two slots and taken herbalism when he reached third level, where he gains another NWP slot. Instead, he chose to stick with his specialization.

Now let's take a look at Keloran's present skills. He has a leatherworking BP score of 10. There is no check modifier for this skill, though Keloran does gain a relevant ability bonus. Leatherworking uses Intelligence as its relevant ability, and Keloran's ability score of 14 entitles him to a +1 bonus.

His fire-building proficiency also starts with a BP score of 10. The check modifier is -1. The relevant ability for this proficiency is Wisdom; Keloran's average score in this ability entitles him to no bonus.

For healing, Keloran has an initial BP score of 13 due to his specialization. Because of the difficult nature of the work, however, he must take a penalty (check modifier of -2). Again, his subject ability score for this proficiency (Wisdom) is average, so there is no modifier for that.

This leaves Keloran the first-level fighter with three proficiency ratings: leatherworking (11), fire-building (9), and healing (11). Upon gaining second level, Keloran must choose which proficiency receives the +1 experience bonus.

## Proficiencies in Role-playing

Listed below are several modifications to the proficiency system. Pick and choose from them as you see fit. Some, all, or none may be appropriate for your campaign.

### Reading/Writing

A character's reading ability can be classified in three categories: illiterate, lettered, and literate. Written communications among illiterate characters is limited to drawings and simple symbolism.

Proficiency	# Slots	Relevant ability	Check Mod	Default Prof.	Group	Source
Acting	1	Cha	-1		(B)	3
Agriculture	1	Int	0		All	1
Alertness	1	Wis	+1	No	All	2, 4
Anatomy	1	Int	0	No	M	1
Animal handling	1	Wis	-1		All	1
Animal lore	1	Int	0		M	1
Animal noise	1	Wis	-1		W, R	2
Animal training	1	Wis	0		All	1, 4
Appraising	1	Int	0		R	1
Armorer	2	Int	-2		W	1
Artistic ability	1	Wis	0		All	1
Astrology	2	Int	0	No	W, P	1
Begging	1	Cha	Var.	No	R	2
Blacksmithing	1	Str	0		All	1
Blind-fighting	2			No	W, R	1
Boating	1	Wis	+1		All	2, 4
Bowye/fletcher	1	Dex	-1		W	1
Brewing	1	Int	0		All	1
Bureaucracy	2	Int	0		P, R	5
Camouflage	1	Wis	0		W, R	4
Carpentry	1	Str	0		All	1
Cartography	1	Int	-2		All	1
Chanting	1	Cha	+2	No	W, P	3
Charioteering	1	Dex	+2		W, R	1
Cheesemaking	1	Int	0		All	8
Cobbling	1	Dex	0		All	1
Cooking	1	Int	0		All	1
Craft instrument	2	Dex	-2	No	(B)	3
Crowd-working	1	Cha	0	No	(B)	1
Dancing	1	Dex	0		All	1
Danger sense	2	Wis	+1	No	All	8
Diagnostics	1	Wis	-1	No	P	5
Direction sense	1	Wis	+1		All	1
Disguise	1	Cha	-1		R	1
Distance sense	1	Wis	0		All	4
Drinking	1	Con	0	No	All	8
Endurance	2	Con	0	No	W, R	1
Engineering	2	Int	-3	No	M, P, R	1
Etiquette	1	Cha	0		All	1
Fast-talking	1	Cha	Var.	No	R	2
Fighting (close)	2	Dex	0	No	W, R	8
Fighting (natural)	2	Str	+1	No	W	8
Fighting (wild)	2	Con	0	No	W	8
Fire building	1	Wis	-1		All	1
Fishing	1	Wis	-1		All	1
Foraging	1	Int	-2		W	4
Forgery	1	Dex	-1		R	1
Gaming	1	Cha	0		W, R	1
Gem Cutting	2	Dex	-2	No	M, R, Psi	1
Healing	2	Wis	-2	No	P	1
Heraldry	1	Int	0		All	1
Herbalism	2	Int	-2		M, P	1, 2
Hiding	2	Int	-1	No	All	8
History (ancient)	1	Int	-1	No	M, P	1
History (local)	1	Cha	0		M, P, R	1
Hunting	1	Wis	-1 (+2*)		W, R	1
Hypnosis	1	Cha	-2	No	Psi	6
Information gathering	1	Int	Var.	No	R	2
Intimidation	1	Str/Cha	Var.	No	W, R	2
Jousting	1	Dex	+2	No	W	5
Juggling	1	Dex	-1		R	1
Jumping	1	Str	0		W, R	1
Languages (ancient)	1	Int	0		M, P	1, 9
Languages (modern)	1	Int	0		All	1, 9
Law	1	Wis	0		W, P	5
Leatherworking	1	Int	0		All	1
Locksmithing	1	Dex	0		R	2
Looting	1	Dex	0		R	2
Mining	2	Wis	+1	No	All	1
Mountaineering	1			No	W, R	1
Musical instrument	1	Dex	-1		P, R, Psi	1

Proficiency	# Slots	Relevant ability	Check Mod	Default Prof.	Group	Source
Navigation	1	Int	-2		All	1, 2
Netherworld knowledge	1	Wis	-3		M, P	7
Observation	1	Int	-1	No	All	2
Oratory	1	Cha	0		W, P	5
Persuasion	1	Cha	0	No	All	4
Poetry	1	Int	-2		(B)	3, 5
Pottery	1	Dex	-2		All	
Reading lips	2	Int	-2	No	R	1
Reading/writing	1	Int	+1		All	1, 9
Religion	1	Wis	0		M, P, Psi	
Riding (airborne)	2	Wis	-1		All	
Riding (land-based)	1	Wis	+3		All	
Riding (sea-based)	2	Dex	-2		All	4
Rope use	1	Dex	0		W, R	
Running	1	Con	-4		W, R	1
Seamanship	1	Dex	+1		All	
Set snares	1	Dex	-1		W, R	1
Signalling	1	Int	-2		W	4
Singing	1	Cha	0		All	1
Spellcraft	1	Int	-2		M, P	
Spelunking	1	Int	-2		W, R	4
Spirit lore	2	Cha	-4	No	M, P	7
Stonemasonry	1	Str	-2		All	
Survival	2	Int	0	No	W	1, (4)
Swimming	1	Str	0		All	
Tailoring	1	Dex	-1		All	1
Tightrope walking	1	Dex	0		R	
Tracking	2	Wis	-5 (0*)	No	W, R	1
Trailing	1	Dex	Var.		R	2
Trail Signs	1	Int	-3 (0*)		W	4
Turnbling	1	Dex	-4 (-1*)		R	1
Venom handling	1	Wis	-2		R	7
Ventriloquism	1	Int	-2		R	
Veterinary healing	1	Wis	-3		P	4
Voice mimicry	2	Cha	Var.	No	W, R	2
Weaponsmithing	3	Int	-3	No	W	1
Weaponsmithing (crude)	1	Wis	-3		W	4
Weather sense	1	Wis	-1	No	All	
Weaving	1	Int	-1		All	
Whistling/humming	1	Dex	+2		All	3
Winemaking	1	Int	0	-	All	8

**Notes:**  
**Check Modifier:**  
 \* Modifier applicable only to Rangers  
 Var. See proficiency description for specific modifiers

**Default Proficiency:**  
 May be treated as a default proficiency  
 No May not be treated as a default proficiency

**Group:**  
 W = Warriors                      M = Mages/Wizards  
 P = Priests                        R = Rogues  
 Psi = Psionicists                (B) = Bards

**Sources:**  
 1. *Player's Handbook*  
 2. *The Complete Thief's Handbook*  
 3. *The Complete Bard's Handbook*  
 4. *The Complete Ranger's Handbook*  
 5. *The Complete Paladin's Handbook*  
 6. *The Complete Psionicist's Handbook*  
 7. *The Complete Book of Necromancers*  
 8. *The Complete Book of Humanoids*  
 9. Article Notes

“Lettered” characters are able to read and write in known languages with a successful proficiency check. Literate characters are fully able to read and write in a specified language; no proficiency check is required. To be “lettered,” a character need expend only one proficiency slot. Thereafter, the character has a rudimentary knowledge of writing in every language he currently knows, or later learns. To become literate, the character must expend an additional proficiency slot for each language desired.

## Languages, Modern

Similar to reading ability, a character's grasp of a modern language can be classified into three categories: acquired, fluent, or native. A character may generally have “native” ability in only one language at a time. (The DM may grant exceptions.) With native ability, not only is the character fluent in that language, but her internal thought processes take place in that language as well. A character's native language comes at no cost in proficiency slots. Additional languages cost the normal price (one proficiency slot per language) for “acquired” ability. To be fluent in a given language, the character needs to specialize in that language at the cost of one additional proficiency slot per language. To adopt another language at a “native” level, several criteria might first be required. For example, a fluent character must specialize a second time in that language (spend an additional proficiency slot), speak only his “new” native language for a period of two months, and have no exposure to his original native language for that period.

Modern language proficiency checks are normally made only in two instances. The first is when a character tries to pass herself off as a native speaker. If the listener is a native speaker, this check is made at a -12 penalty. A fluent listener is at a -6 penalty, and an acquired listener is at -3. Characters fluent in the language they are trying to pass themselves off in receive at +3 bonus to this check. The second instance in which a proficiency check may be required is when two characters are trying to communicate in an acquired language.

Normally this would be no problem, but under stressful conditions (e.g., combat, storms, high winds, etc.) the DM may require a successful proficiency check on the part of the speaker, the listener, or both. Otherwise some form of miscommunication results. Note that if at least one of the characters has a fluent or

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greater understanding of the language, no check is required.

### Languages, Ancient

In most cases, knowledge of ancient languages is focused on written communication. Therefore, before learning an ancient language, a character must first be "lettered" (q.v.). Specializing in an ancient language may give a character bonuses to his proficiency checks at the DM's discretion.

### Extended Specialization

If allowed by the DM, a character may specialize more than once in a proficiency by expending additional proficiency slots. While the game mechanic benefits may not appear to justify such a "waste" of proficiency slots, one must first consider the gaming effects of extended specialization. Each level of specialization increases a proficient character's depth of knowledge and understanding. A first specialization would simply make the character a "specialist." A second specialization would yield an "expert," a third would yield a "master," etc. This could affect game play in several ways depending upon the DM's wishes.

Certain guilds and organizations within a campaign, for example, may be open only to characters of "master" proficiency or above.

For exceptionally difficult or unusual tasks, the DM may require a minimum level of specialization to even make the attempt. (For example, the DM may require that in order to create a particular magical instrument, a master craftsman must first fashion the instrument.) A character with a high level of specialization may be renowned for his skills and eagerly sought after for either instruction or employment. Keep in mind that specialists in proficiencies costing two slots would be much more rare (due to the higher "cost") and hence would be much more sought after.

### "Innate" Proficiencies

Innate proficiencies are those proficiencies which list no relevant ability. Normally, characters may not specialize in these proficiencies. If the DM so desires, he may allow specialization determining game effects on a case by case basis.

### NPC Proficiencies

Allowing PCs unrestricted specialization in proficiencies may appear to give

them an unfair advantage over NPC artisans and laborers. Keep in mind, however, that PCs have been required to expend a great deal of time and energy in learning their trades. NPCs will have done the same. While player characters were learning how to wield swords, daggers, and staves, NPCs were learning how to brew exquisite ale, navigate rapids, or construct castles. To simulate this, it is appropriate to allow NPCs extra proficiency slots. A good rule of thumb is: the number of NWP slots equals Intelligence divided by two (rounded down).

### One Final Word

The use of nonweapon proficiencies allows players to individualize their characters. Some have argued that NWPs give player characters an unfair advantage. It is all a question of game balance. Admittedly, the above rules give characters the chance to become extremely talented in specified fields. Over-specialized characters will soon learn the error of their ways, however, when they suddenly realize they don't know how to swim across that river, when they can't read the notices posted outside the inn, or when they keep stepping on that duchess's toes at the King's Royal Ball.

Finally, Dungeon Masters must ensure that nonweapon proficiencies aren't being abused. Certainly a bowyer can make a bow, but not while racing through a forest on the way to warn a small town under threat of imminent invasion. When designing adventures, DM's should keep the challenges varied. Give the characters opportunities to track fleeing criminals, scale rocky bluffs, and decipher ancient runes.

Remember that the nonweapon proficiency system is a tool. Don't use it to penalize players. If a player comes up with a unique solution to a problem, don't disallow it because he doesn't have a particular proficiency. On the other hand, if a character's NWP enhances the effectiveness of an action, let the players know it. It will give them a greater sense of accomplishment as well as make for more memorable gaming.

*Clayton Beal is a drill instructor for the United States Coast Guard. He lives in Cape May, New Jersey. This is his first sale to DRAGON® Magazine.*

# Campaign Classics



## Three Greyhawk Grimoires

by Robert S. Mullin

illustrated by Amy Lusebrink

Few would deny that Mordenkainen and those who made up the Circle of Eight are the most famous of Oerth's wizards, for the spells bearing their names appear in numerous AD&D® rule-books and accessories. Curiously, the magic of three of Oerth's most notorious, if not equally famous wizards have been overlooked. I refer to Vecna, Iggwilv, and Acererak.

Vecna, of course, is famous for the pair of artifacts that bear his name, and not many years ago, he was featured in the adventure *Vecna Lives!* Iggwilv is known from *The Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth* and *Isle of the Ape* adventures, and comments about her are also made in the Greyhawk accessory *luz the Evil*. Finally, Acererak is given brief mention in the description of the Vast Swamp in both the original *WORLD OF GREYHAWK®* boxed set as well as the more recent *From the Ashes* boxed set. Still, he is more widely remembered from the classic adventure *Tomb of Horrors*.

This article describes a trio of spell tomes detailing the spells devised by these nefarious wizards. Note, however, that the historical accounts of these spell books have been greatly influenced by the background material contained in the accessories and adventures mentioned above (*et al.*), so interested parties are encouraged to refer to those works to see the correlation. Readers are warned, however, that the contents of these odious texts are not for the weak or foolish, and only those who possess surpassing ingenuity and a great measure of luck should have any chance of obtaining even one of them.

### Vecna's Ineffable Variorum Appearance

This tome measures 2' long, 18" wide, and 4" thick. The covers and spine are constructed of bones and bone fragments from numerous creatures, which are magically fused to form solid surfaces. Jointed bones of unknown origin

are placed along the edges between the spine and covers, giving the impression of hinges, though the actual hinges are cleverly hidden within the joint-bones themselves. There is no clasp or lock of the usual sort, rather; a small, intact skeletal hand is attached to either cover, the fingers interlocking when the book is closed. A command word causes the hands to clench, holding the book closed against all magic short of a limited wish. A second command word releases the skeletal grip.

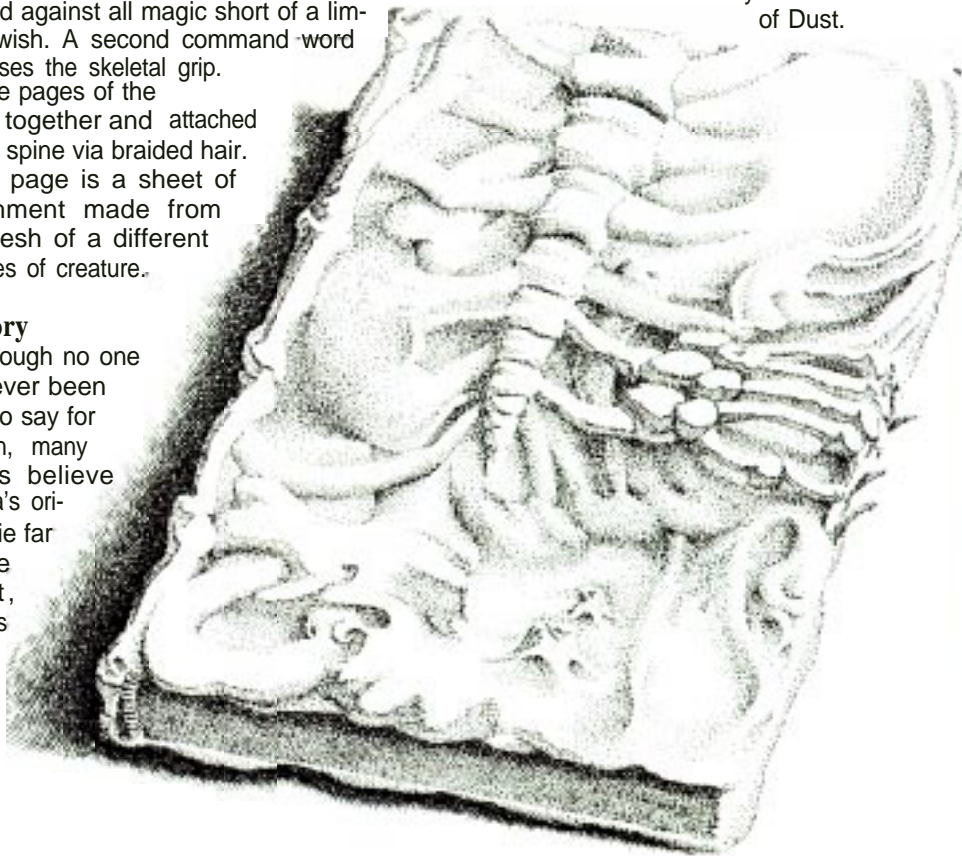
The pages of the book are sewn together and attached to the spine via braided hair. Each page is a sheet of parchment made from the flesh of a different species of creature.

### History

Though no one has ever been able to say for certain, many sages believe Vecna's origins lie far to the west, across the

Hellfurnaces, in the blasted lands once called the Suel Empire. In fact, Vecna's penchant for brutality and his obsession for world domination practically brands him as Suloise — after all, the ancient Suel people were (and still are, in some places) noted for their cruelty and policy of conquest. Then, of course, there is Vecna's unequalled skill in magic, leading those same studious observers to believe he may have once been a Mage of Power, one of the legendary Suloise wizards responsible for the Invoked Devastation. All of this is conjecture, of course, but it is not beyond reason.

Nonetheless, some of that speculation is based on information regarding *Vecna's Ineffable Variorum*. Some 400 years ago, a band of adventures sold an ancient Suel text to a book dealer in Niole Dra, claiming to have recovered it from a ruined city in the Sea of Dust.



The tome, though untitled, contained the dates of a great many events and happenings, the most recent of which preceded the Invoked Devastation by nearly 200 years. What makes this book so relevant, however, is that it describes what many scholars regard as the finest and most accurate description of *Vecna's Ineffable Variorum*. This fact alone places the *Variorum* and, by extension, Vecna himself in the Suel lands prior to the Empire's demise.

The *Variorum* has managed to evade inclusion in most historical records of the current millennium, for even vague reports of its whereabouts are few and far between. So far, only a mere handful have been confirmed. Even Uhas of Neheli's famed *Chronicle of Secret Times*, which places Vecna in the Sheldomar Valley when the Kingdom of Keoland was still very young, makes no mention of the *Variorum*, thus implying that the tome may have been destroyed along with the Suel Empire.

Perhaps the most conclusive record that the *Variorum* survived the Invoked Devastation can be found in the journals of Eldarath Allythyr, a drow wizard from the drow capital city Erelhei-Cinlu. These journals relate the tale of how Eldarath came into possession of "a strange tome of flesh and bones," and his use of a spell that "repels enemies in a wave of force and fire." The journals were captured in CY 517, when Eldarath fell in the Stark Mounds to a circle of wizards from Geoff's Society of the Magivestre, but when his body was searched, the *Variorum* was not among his possessions. It is difficult to authenticate this particular record, however, for comparative drow works are often as hard to come by as pre-Devastation Suel manuscripts.

In CY 581, mere months before the opening stages of the Greyhawk Wars, Vecna returned to Oerth intent on placing himself as master of both the world and the deities who watch over it. While it is uncertain if Vecna possessed his *Variorum* during this bid to overthrow Oerth's immortals, the archmage Mordekainen (who is rumored to have been the guiding force behind Vecna's eventual failure and subsequent disappearance) insists, "If Vecna did have the *Variorum* at the time, the result of the battle against him would not have been favorable for the people of the Flanaess."

Maybe the book was destroyed during the Invoked Devastation, or perhaps Vecna simply wrote it off as unimportant

in fulfilling his ends. Whatever the case, *Vecna's Ineffable Variorum* has yet to surface, and undoubtedly it is better this way.

## Contents

The actual contents of Vecna's *Variorum* are a matter of conjecture, for there are few records concerning it, and what does exist is vague and often contradicts other sources regarding its contents. Some details are common to most of these sources, however. One, of course, is the book's appearance. The rest are as follows:

All writing is in a symmetrical yet assertive style, with a distinctive slanting of the words to the left side. The ink is actually blood and has maintained its original red coloration throughout the centuries, somehow resisting the change to brown. Furthermore, the blood-ink appears to be wet, though it is not. Obviously, a minor enchantment of some kind maintains the integrity of the blood-ink, keeping it dark and seemingly fresh.

*Vecna's Ineffable Variorum* contains a generous selection of wizard spells, but while most of them are commonly used by modern wizards, a few (the unique ones detailed below) have been out of mainstream circulation for hundreds of years, and this alone is a testament to the tome's value. The spells contained in the *Variorum* appear in the following order: *chill touch*, *detect magic*, *identify*, *magic missile*, *read magic*; *knock*, *spectral hand*, *wizard lock*; *depth perception\**, *dispel magic*, *fireball*, *hold undead*, *lightning bolt*, *phantom steed*, *wraithform*; *contagion*, *enervation*, *polymorph other*, *polymorph self*, *cloudkill*, *telekinesis*, *Vecna's conflagration\**, *wall of force*; *chain lightning*, *death spell*, *globe of invulnerability*, *muss suggestion*, *turn lightning\**; *control undead*, *delayed blast fireball*, *teleport without error*; *incendiary cloud*, *polymorph any object*; *energy drain*, *power word kill*, *shape change*, and *time stop*. (Those marked by an asterisk are unique spells.) On the second-to-last page is a spell which abruptly ends midway through its description. This is not the result of a missing page or incomplete research; rather, its inscription simply wasn't completed. The spell is called *Vecna's Ultimate Abjuration*, and it is a 9th-level spell. Though incomplete, a wizard able to understand it will learn that it is intended for use by liches, serving to protect the lich from mind-control effects, including spells, spell-like powers, magical devices, psionics, clerical turning/commanding, even the will of gods of

death or undeath. Despite this knowledge, it would be almost impossible for a living wizard to complete it, for it requires a lich's mind to fully comprehend the conceptual aspects of the spell and thus the proper insight to conduct the research necessary to finish it.

## Depth Perception (Illusion/Phantasm)

Level: 3

Range: 0

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1 hour +1 turn/level

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: None

This spell allows a caster who does not possess normal depth perception to view his surroundings as if his vision included such a function. (The reasons for such a deficiency may vary, but almost always involves vision in only one eye.) When cast, the spell creates a complex illusion that effectively "doubles" all the caster sees, providing him with three-dimensional vision instead of the depthless surface of his usual vision. As the caster directs his visual interests, the illusion moves to double the scenery, never becoming blurred or wavering enough for the caster to notice. While in effect, the spell negates any penalties the caster usually suffers due to a lack of depth perception (e.g., penalties to attacks, targeting, judging distance, catching thrown objects, etc.).

This spell does not convey peripheral vision to the caster. If the caster has the use of only one eye, the spell does not give sight to the blind or missing eye. Thus, peripheral vision on that side of the caster's head is still absent. Likewise, if the caster is completely blind, the spell will not impart the ability to see; the caster must have some visual capabilities already.

If a caster with functional depth perception uses this spell, he becomes dizzy and his vision is blurred; any attacks are at -4 (the caster's penalty becomes a bonus for the object's saving throw in the case of magical attack) due to the illusory image the spell superimposes over his normal vision.

In any case, only the caster sees the illusory surroundings, for it actually occurs within his visual organs. As such, the spell cannot be disbelieved by others, or even detected without the aid of magic. Otherwise, the spell remains in effect until

the duration expires (regardless of the caster's wishes), the caster dies, or a successful *dispel magic* is cast, after which time the caster's vision returns to normal.

The material components are a pair of intact eyeballs, both from the same creature, which must be of the caster's race. Note that a mixed-race caster (e.g., a half-elf) can select eyeballs from either parent race or from his own "mixed" race.

(It should be noted that this spell's inclusion in the *Variorum* is a bit of a mystery. At first glance, one can see the logic in its inclusion — after all, history suggests that Vecna lost an eye in his battle with Kas, and thus, the spell would be most useful to the lich. Still, history also states that Vecna perished in that battle, which would preclude his creation of the spell. This point has caused much debate among scholars, and some have questioned whether or not the *Variorum* is even Vecna's work. Other sages believe the spell was developed by a later owner of the tome, an owner whose magical script was identical to Vecna's. And still other educated individuals suggest that Vecna looked into the future and saw the loss of his eye — thus inspiring him to create the spell — but did not see his own death in the process.)

### Vecna's Conflagration (Evocation)

Level: 5  
Range: 0  
Components: V  
Duration: Instantaneous  
Casting Time: 5  
Area of Effect: 30' radius  
Saving Throw: Special

When this spell is invoked, an explosive wave of force and fire erupts from the caster, affecting everything within the area of effect, save for the caster, who is not harmed.

All creatures in the area of effect must save vs. spells. Those who fail suffer 2d10 hp fire damage and are thrust away from the caster to a distance of 30', suffering an additional 3d6 hp damage due to the concussive force. Inanimate objects in the area of effect must save vs. magical fire and crushing blow to avoid destruction. Creatures who save suffer no fire damage but are still thrown, and items carried by them must save vs. crushing blow.

Inanimate objects that are not carried or held by a creature, but that are held securely in place (e.g., a tree or a half-buried boulder) will not be pushed away

from the caster, but may suffer fire damage if the save fails. Unsecured objects (e.g., rocks, logs, furniture, etc.) suffer the full effects of the spell, regardless of size or weight, if the saving throws are failed.

Creatures 30'-60' away from the caster must save vs. death magic to avoid being hit by objects thrown out of the spell's area of effect. Those who fail suffer damage from being struck by flying objects. Objects at that range must save vs. crushing blow to avoid impact damage.

### Turn Lightning (Abjuration)

Level: 6  
Range: 0  
Components: V, S, M  
Duration: 5 rounds/level  
Casting Time: 6  
Area of Effect: Special  
Saving Throw: None

This spell provides the caster with a special form of protection against electricity-based attacks by turning them back upon their source, without harming the caster of *turn lightning*. For example, if a lightning bolt is thrown at the caster, *turn lightning* causes the bolt to return to its caster, who suffers damage from his own spell (though any saving throws still apply). Even if the lightning bolt is cast at a range which normally prevents a rebound from reaching its caster, *turn lightning* empowers the lightning bolt so that it completes the return trip. (Note that a spell like *cull lightning* causes lightning that originates from a cloud and not the spellcaster, so *turn lightning* merely sends the lightning back to the heavens.)

Electrical attacks that cannot be reflected back on their source for logical reasons (e.g., a sustained "field" of electrical energy) are not affected by *turn lightning*, but the caster is immune to such assaults while the *turn lightning* lasts. In any case, the spell lasts until its duration expires or it is removed with a *limited wish*; *dispel magic* has no effect.

The material components for this spell are a small ball of gum and a silvered glass mirror, both of which are consumed upon casting the spell.

### Iggwilv's Nethertome Appearance

Like many of the arcane texts attributed to Iggwilv (the *Fiendomicon* of

*Iggwilv*, to be precise), the *Nethertome's* covers are made of ebony, as is the spine, over which is stretched a single piece of black tanar'ri hide. The hide is secured to the covers with brass cornerpieces and edging, and a brass clasp holds it shut when not in use, though it has no lock. The brasswork retains a continuous sheen, resisting corrosion, tarnish, and similar conditions — obviously a magical embellishment.

Unlike Iggwilv's other known works, the *Nethertome* forms a complete and perfect square, each side measuring 20", and its 2" thickness belies the vast amount of information it contains; the pages are composed of an uncharacteristically delicate, almost transparent parchment, and the lettering is small and somewhat cramped.

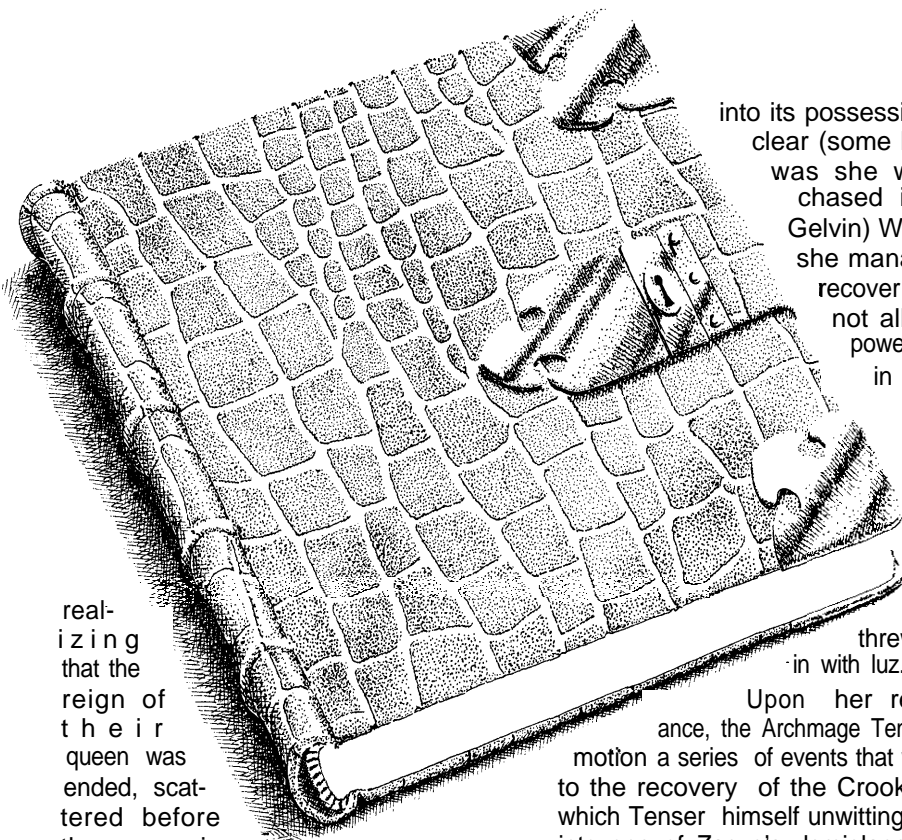
### History

The Archmage Iggwilv first made her presence known circa CY 460. Shortly thereafter, she conquered the fledgling nation of Perrenland, ruling it for a decade from her secret lair in the Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth.

It is often said that much of Iggwilv's power came as a result of her discovery of that fell place and the treasures it contained. Nonetheless, power is what she had, and she used it well. Oddly, some learned historians claim that Iggwilv was an accomplished necromancer, even a specialist in that field. How these noted scholars substantiated such a theory is a mystery, for Iggwilv had long borne the reputation of one who associated with fiends, and such creatures were heavy among the ranks of her servants. The very fact that she managed to summon and bind Graz'zt himself would seem to suggest that conjuration, rather than necromancy, was her forte.

Iggwilv's reliance on fiends to increase her power eventually caused her downfall. During the course of one of her malevolent rituals, she made a critical mistake that accidentally freed Graz'zt from his captivity, and a spectacular battle ensued. In the end, Iggwilv was triumphant, forcing Graz'zt to flee to his Abyssal home, but she paid a dear price for that victory. The wounds she suffered reached far beyond merely the physical, damaging her psyche to such a degree that much of her personal power was torn from her.

When the news of Iggwilv's condition reached her oppressed subjects, they immediately took up arms and marched on her secluded abode. Her minions,



realizing that the reign of their queen was ended, scattered before the oncoming armies and took with them the bulk of her amassed fortune. Among the items stolen by her former servants was the *Nethertome*.

For about 60 years, the *Nethertome* was absent from recorded history, its whereabouts and owner unknown. Then, in CY 521, it turned up in the library of Thillion "Flamefingers" Dern, an aged Bisselite mage who died without an heir. During the auction of Thillion's belongings, the tome was sold to one Gelvin Torlar, a mage who, at the time he bought it, did not have the magical wherewithal to employ its secrets.

Surprisingly, Gelvin held the book against all comers, even in those early years when his personal might was lacking and those who wished to seize the tome for themselves assailed him on what seemed a weekly basis. By the end of the decade, however, the constant battle to hold the tome had exhausted Gelvin's funds and magical resources, and he was forced to sell the *Nethertome* for a mere pittance, else starve or be slain in a spell duel. Although Gelvin made it known that the *Nethertome* had been sold, the actual transaction took place secretly. Thus, the buyer's identity was never learned, and the *Nethertome* vanished once again.

Perhaps the most astounding moment in the *Nethertome's* history came in the years just prior to the Greyhawk Wars. Iggwilv had returned, and with her was the *Nethertome*, though how she came

into its possession is not clear (some believe it was she who purchased it from Gelvin) Worse still, she managed to recover most (if not all) of the power she lost in her battle with Graz't al those years ago, and she threw her lot in with luz.

Upon her reappearance, the Archmage Tenser set in motion a series of events that would see to the recovery of the Crook of Rao, which Tenser himself unwittingly carried into one of Zagyg's demiplanes, where he lost it. A band of adventurers was charged with recovering the Crook, and was able to do so and turn it over to Tenser, despite Iggwilv's attempts to stop them.

Iggwilv was not so easily put off, and she renewed her practice of summoning fiends and binding them to her will. Why the Crook of Rao was not used to stop her (for such was the purpose for its recovery) is uncertain, though some whispers hint that whoever obtained the artifact from Tenser lost it thereafter (which would explain the recent tales that suggest the Crook of Rao is in the possession of Drax the Invulnerable, Lord Protector of Rel Astra). By the time the Greyhawk Wars rolled around, Iggwilv had a sizeable force under her control, which she put at the disposal of luz.

Fortunately, Iggwilv had not learned from her old mistakes. Early in the Wars, she attempted to summon and bind Graz't once more, but Graz't, who had not forgotten Iggwilv's previous transgression against him, was prepared. When he stepped through Iggwilv's gate, he produced a unique magical device which sundered her protective circles and binding magic. It was here that Graz't captured and imprisoned his former consort, and despite the objections of luz, Graz't confined Iggwilv in the Abyss, where she remains to this very day.

Nonetheless, it is known that the *Nethertome* did not accompany her on the journey to her Abyssal prison, but the

current whereabouts of the book cannot be confirmed. It is generally believed that luz turned it over to one of his Boneheart wizards, and most fingers point to Jumper or Null, as the *Nethertome* would be most useful to them in their work at Fleischshriver.

## Contents

The *Nethertome* is divided into several chapters. Like *Iggwilv's Fiendomicon*, most of it deals with the lower planes (and the tanar'ri in particular). The beginning chapters give a highly detailed and surprisingly accurate treatise on the Blood War, though it has an obvious bias favoring the Abyssal fiends.

The next handful of chapters describe the chaotic nature of the Abyss, methods of "safe" travel through its infinite layers, and most importantly, areas that should be avoided by mortals.

Several more chapters describe the denizens of the Abyss, the tanar'ri in particular. These chapters describe their politics, psychology, and general behavior with astounding clarity, almost as if it had actually been written by a tanar'ri. In many places, individual tanar'ri are named. The most notable, and most oft referred to, is Graz't, of course.

The last chapter contains a modest and seemingly incomplete assortment of wizard spells, two of which are unique to the *Nethertome*. The spells appear in the following order (with asterisks marking the unique spells): *protection from evil*; *protection from evil, 10' radius*; *conjure elemental*; *contact other plane*; *domination*; *anti-magic shell*; *ensnarement*; *invisible stalker*; *force-cage*; *sequester*; *binding*; *maze*; *trap the soul*; *gate*; *Iggwilv's lightning cage*; *Iggwilv's timeless sleep\**; *imprisonment*; *temporal stasis*.

## Iggwilv's Lightning Cage (Evocation)

Level: 9

Range: 10 yards/2 levels

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1 hour +1 turn/level

Casting Time: 3

Area of Effect: 20' cube

Saving Throw: Special

This spell is a variant of the 7th-level wizard spell *forcecage*, and it is identical to that spell except as follows:

First, the "bars" of force energy which form the cage are electrified. Any creature, whether inside or outside, who makes contact with the electrified bars or touches them with an object composed

of metal or other conductive material, must save vs. spells or suffer 10d6+10 hp damage. A successful save reduces this damage by half, but the *lightning cage* is not dispelled, nor are its electrical effects.

Second, the floor of the *lightning cage* is composed of a solid "sheet" of force energy equal to a *wall of force*, but it is charged only on its outside surface.

Third, unlike a *forcecage*, *Iggwilv's lightning cage* cannot be altered to form a solid cube of electrified walls of force.

Finally, the *lightning cage* does not require the ritual drawing of a square with powdered diamond as is necessary with a *forcecage*, but it does require a material component. This material component consists of a "wand" of amber (worth 100 gp), tipped with a transparent gemstone worth at least 1,000 gp.

### Iggwilv's Timeless Sleep

#### (Alteration)

Level: 9

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M

Duration: Special

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: One creature

Saving Throw: Special

Contrary to what its name implies, this spell is not an improved *sleep* spell, so creatures who are normally immune or resistant to sleep magic have no such invulnerability to this spell. In truth, *Iggwilv's timeless sleep* is a specialized variant of the *temporal stasis* spell. When cast, the wizard touches the recipient, placing him in suspended animation. Like *temporal stasis*, the natural bodily functions of the recipient completely halt; the subject does not age or require nourishment. In fact, the subject doesn't even need to breathe while affected.

Unlike *temporal stasis*, however, the effects of *Iggwilv's timeless sleep* are not intended as a potentially eternal state. The spell is permanent up until certain conditions are met, at which time the spell ends and the recipient "awakens." These conditions are determined at the time of the spell's casting, and are regulated by the same rules which govern the triggering of a *magic mouth* spell. Note, however, that a *timeless sleep* does not end unless the triggering conditions are fulfilled or a *wish* is used; *dispel magic* is not sufficient to end it prematurely. Furthermore, the triggering conditions must occur within 30' of the recipient in order for the *timeless sleep* to terminate.

Once the *timeless sleep* has ended, the recipient is fully aware of his surroundings and may act accordingly; he suffers no disorientation from the suspended animation.

The primary use of this spell is to prolong the life of living guardian creatures by placing them in a dormant state until their services are needed. Another common use is to prevent a being with a mortal wound or other fatal affliction from dying when healing or curative magic is not immediately available. In both cases, the subject usually is a willing recipient, and, as such, no saving throw is required. If the subject is an unwilling target, however, the caster must make an attack roll in order to touch the victim, and, even if the touch is successful, the subject receives a saving throw vs. spells to resist the magic. If the save fails, the subject is affected by the spell as noted above.

The material components for this spell are 500 gp worth of powdered gemstone (any type will do) mixed with a handful of fine sand, both of which are consumed by the spell.

### Acererak's Libram

#### Appearance

This smallish book measures precisely 12" long, 9" wide, and 2" thick. The covers and spine are meticulously cut sheets black adamantite, held together with a series of small, interlocking hinges which run the entire length of the spine's long edges. Acererak's personal symbol, an encircled capital "A" entwined with serpents, is stamped into the center of the front cover and inlaid with mithril.

Another strip of black adamantite is connected to the inner surface of the spine, to which are attached 12 rings of the same metal. The *Libram's* pages, each a carefully fashioned sheet of mithril, stamped with perfectly symmetrical runes and glyphs, are held in place by these rings.

#### History

Little is known concerning the being called Acererak, for the name was ancient when eastern Oerik was still ruled by the Flan peoples, and the frightening tales of the *Tome of Horrors* had long been a part of the folklore throughout the Flanaess when the Kingdom of Aerdy was but an idea posed by an Oeridian chieftain. What can be said, however, is that if Vecna was the most powerful lich ever to walk the face of Oerth, Acererak was a close second, for

only a being of great might could strike so much fear into the hearts of men yet remain mostly absent from the eyes of history.

In CY 446, the same year which saw the founding of the Iron League, a Sunndi wizard named Lindaer entered the Vast Swamp with a small yet powerful band of companions. A month or so later, Lindaer and a single comrade returned to civilized lands, claiming to have located Acererak's Tomb. The pair would not discuss what occurred within that grim place, but to quell disbelievers they regularly displayed their greatest prize: *Acererak's Libram*.

Perhaps they revealed the *Libram* once too often, for during a journey to the city of Greyhawk, where they hoped to assess its value, they were set upon by a large bandit force in the Cairn Hills. Though both Lindaer and his companion survived, it was quite obvious that the bandits had been interested only in the *Libram*, for that is all they wanted, having left the pair with the balance of their valuables. To his dying day, Lindaer believed the bandits were hired to steal the book — probably by a mage — for it would have had little value to such miscreants otherwise. No one ever claimed responsibility for the attack, however, and even the usual finger-pointing was strangely lacking.

Nevertheless, it is known that for the next 80 years, the *Libram* exchanged hands at a fervent pace, with no single owner holding it long enough to demand historical commentary. But in CY 532, *Acererak's Libram* came into the possession of one Shanadar Vantros, a wizard of some repute operating in the Great Kingdom.

Shanadar was noted for his zealous obsession with the elimination of his rivals, and his regular use of the spell *Acererak's blackstone* (detailed below) suggests that he owned the book for quite a few years. It is also said that Shanadar's flagrant use of the *blackstone* spell ended in his demise, for one of his own *blackstones* was used against him. It seems that Shanadar sent a *blackstone* "gift" to a rival (hinted to be another mage, who was later banished from the Great Kingdom for attempting to usurp the throne, but records are vague on this), but the rival, having learned how Shanadar managed so effectively to dispose of his opponents, carefully avoided exposing the *blackstone* to magic. Then, when Shanadar was away on personal business, the rival penetrated the wiz-

ard's tower, using the *blackstone* itself to bypass the tower's magical defenses.

Once inside, the rival hid the *blackstone* and placed numerous triggering spells in the chamber. When Shanadar returned, he triggered the spells set by his rival, which subsequently detonated the *blackstone*, destroying Shanadar and most of his tower. The *Libram* was nowhere to be found in the rubble.

So it was until CY 585, the Year of Peace. In a meeting of the senior members of Greyhawk City's Guild of Wizardry, Jallarzi Sallivarian informed those present that, while magically disguised, she overheard an aged dwarf give an exact description of the *Libram* to a group of his fellows. Through her eavesdropping, she also learned that the tome was being held in one of the three dwarven enclaves in and around the northern Abbor-Alz, either Dumadan, Greysmere, or Karakast. How the dwarves

came to possess *Acererak's Libram* is a mystery, but this is unimportant in light of what the dwarves intend to do with it. If Jallarzi's information is correct, the dwarves plan to dismantle the *Libram* and use its valuable metals to construct more "useful" items like tools and weapons. The Wizards' Guild plans to recover the book before the dwarves destroy it, but to date, they have yet to learn which enclave has it; the dwarves are not talking.

## Contents

The spells in the *Libram* are few, and only one (with an asterisk) is unique. They are: *audible glamor*; *levitate*, *magic mouth*, *web*; *lightning bolt*; *enchanted weapon*; *animate dead*; *enchant an item*, *programmed illusion*; *phase door*, *reverse gravity*, *teleport without error*; *antipathy/sympathy*, *permanency*; *Acererak's blackstone\**, *temporal stasis*.

## Acererak's Blackstone (Alteration, Evocation)

Level: 9

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M

Duration: Special

Casting Time: 1 turn

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: Special

This spell requires a large black gemstone of any kind worth at least 5,000 gp and a functional *ioun stone* of the spell-absorbing, ellipsoid variety. When the spell is cast, the *ioun stone* is drawn into the gemstone, thus creating the *blackstone*. Once done, the *blackstone* is capable of absorbing magical energy from any source, be it a spell, spell-like power, or magical device. Such energies cast directly upon the *blackstone* are instantly absorbed. Likewise, if the *blackstone* is within the area of effect, magic is absorbed without any effect. If the *blackstone* is brought into an active area of

effect (e.g. a previously cast *continual light*, *airy water*, etc.), touched to the surface of a magically created barrier (e.g., a wall of *force*, *shield*, *prismatic sphere*, etc.), touched to a creature or object affected or influenced by magic (e.g., *charmed* or *summoned* creatures, *held doors*, a caster with active *detection magic*, etc.), or comes in contact with any magic controlled from afar (e.g., the various *Bigby's hand* spells, *Tenser's floating disc*, etc.), the

contacted magic is absorbed. This absorption does not affect the enchantments of permanent items, such as rings, armor, weapons, etc., but if such a device can release a magical effect (e.g., a sword releasing a *fireball*, etc.), the effect is absorbed if the *blackstone* is within the area of effect. Likewise, it does not drain charges from items like a magical staff or wand, but released effects of those devices are absorbed.

All spells, spell-like abilities, and magic effects are absorbed if employed by anyone carrying or touching the *blackstone*.

If *detect magic* or similar magic is cast on the *blackstone*, the caster will see a sudden "flash" of magical power before the divination is absorbed. *Identify* and other property-revealing spells show the caster only that it can absorb magic before that magic is itself absorbed.

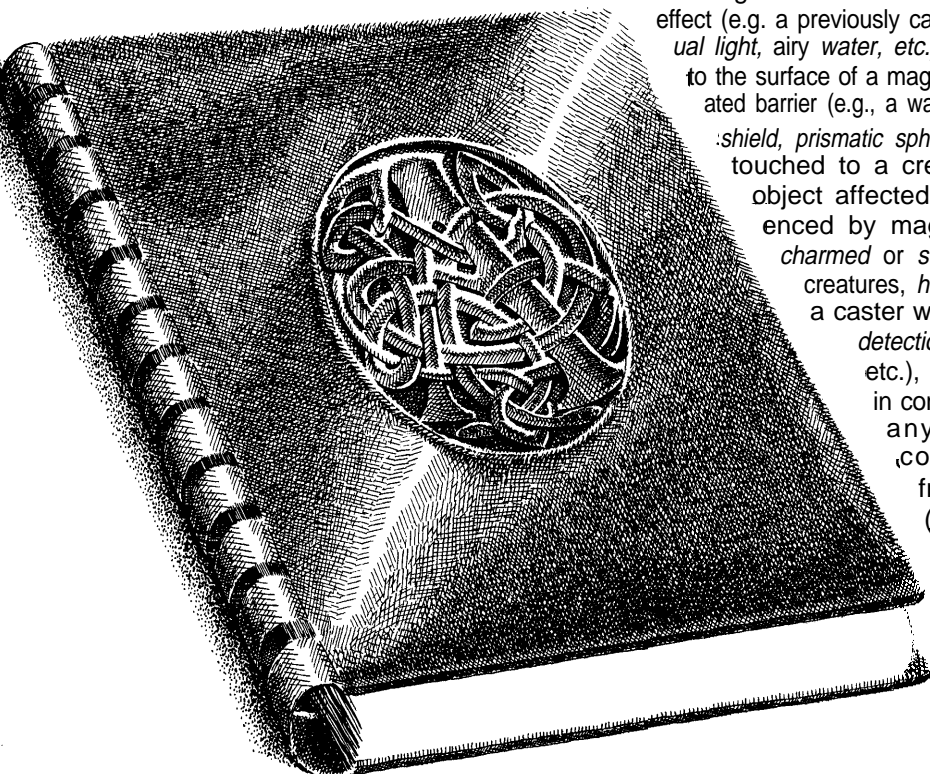
While the *blackstone* may seem useful at first, it is typically used as a trap for greedy treasure hunters, offered as a "gift" to rivals, or placed so to be found by an enemy. In fact, the *blackstone* is quite baneful to its owner, especially if the user thinks it a defense against magic or probes it too much with magic.

The *blackstone* can absorb a number of spell levels equal to the *ioun stone* used in the *blackstone's* creation, regardless of the comparable level of the effect (the *blackstone* does not have the spell-level limits of the *ioun stone* in this regard). Thus, if the *ioun stone* was able to absorb 14 spell levels before burning out, the *blackstone* can absorb 14 spell levels. If this number is ever exceeded (absorbed energy cannot be safely released or negated to allow continued spell absorption), the energy is absorbed, but the *blackstone* instantly explodes in a wave of raw magical energy.

All creatures within 60' of the *blackstone* suffer 1 d4 hp damage per spell level absorbed (including the excess levels that caused the explosion). A save vs. breath weapon reduces the damage by half, but all inanimate items within the area (including carried items) must save vs. disintegration or be destroyed. Any creature actually holding the *blackstone* when it explodes suffers a -4 penalty to the saving throw.



Robert S. Mullin is a furniture refinisher who lives in Perkisie, Pennsylvania. This is his fourth appearance in the pages of DRAGON® Magazine.



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## Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines must be observed.

In order to ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be either typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

The information given in the listing must include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held
2. Site and location
3. Guests of honor (if applicable)
4. Special events offered
5. Registration fees or attendance requirements, and,
6. Address(es) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. Unless stated otherwise, all dollar values given for U.S. and Canadian conventions are in U.S. currency.

**WARNING:** We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Our wide circulation ensures that over a quarter of a million readers worldwide see each issue. Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the first Monday of each month, four months prior to the on sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the first Monday of September. Announcements for North American and Pacific conventions must be mailed to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, 201 Sheridan Springs Rd., Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. Announcements for Europe must be posted an additional month before the deadline to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Limited, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at TSR, Inc., (414) 248-3625 (U.S.A.). Questions or changes concerning European conventions should be directed to TSR Limited, (0223) 212517 (U.K.).



### Games University, Jan. 5-7 CA

The Red Lion Hotel in Ontario, Calif. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a sanctioned Magic: The Gathering tournament. Registration: \$20 preregistered before Dec. 31, \$25 on site. Write: Ultraviolet Productions, P.O. Box 668, Upland, CA 91785.

### Necrocon 10, Jan. 5-7 OH

Harley Hotel, Columbus, Ohio. Special guest: Kailen Mitchell. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include demos, workshops, dealers, tournaments, and a costume contest. Registration: \$12 preregistered, \$15 on site. Write: Ravenstone Games, 6825 Flags Center Drive, Columbus, OH 43229.

### Sunquest '96, Jan. 5-7 FL

Sheraton Plaza at The Florida Mall, Orlando, Fla. Guests include Jean Rea, Tom Prusa, Jackie Cassada, Nicky Rea, Darwin and Peter Bromley, and Ruth Thompson. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGA® Network events, tournaments, an art show and auction, and charity events. Registration: \$30 on site. Write: Sunquest '96, P.O. Box 677069, Orlando, FL 32867-7069, or e-mail: on GENie [T.REED10], CompuServe 172337, 234], AOL [RFarns].

### Agog 9, Jan. 12-14 AZ

Tucson Convention Center, Tucson, Ariz. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a raffle, an auction, and a miniature painting contest. Registration: \$14 on site. Write: AGOG 9 c/o Gamers Haven, 2241 East Broadway, Tucson AZ 85719.

### Crusades'96, Jan. 12-14 CT

Comfort Inn of Darien, Darien, Conn. Events include role-playing card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include an auction, dealers, a painting contest, and sculpting and painting seminars. Write: CGC P.O.Box 403, Fairfield, CT 06430 or e-mail: Quillup@aol.com.

### Wright State Game Fair, Jan. 13 OH

Wright State University Student Union, Dayton, Ohio. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments, miniature painting contests, dealers, artists, movies, and a charity auction. Registration: \$15 on site. Write: WSU Adventurers Guild, W033 Student Union, Dayton, OH 45435.

### Legends & Legions '96, Jan. 13-14 FL

Collegiate Village Inn, Tallahassee, Fla. Events include role-playing card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments, dealers, and a painting contest. Registration: \$12/day and \$20/weekend thereafter. Write: NFGA-Con, 931 Kendall Dr., Tallahassee, FL 32301.

### Constitution IV, Jan. 19-21 MD

The Best Western Maryland Inn in Laurel, Maryland. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers and tournaments. Write: Constitution IV, P.O. Box 13607, Silver Spring, MD 20911.

### Jonsecon 3, Jan. 19-21 FL

Cuong Nhu Karate Health Center, Gainesville, Fla. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers and tournaments. Registration: \$7 preregistered, \$10 on site. E-mail: jonescon@afn.org or on the web at: <http://www.afn.org/~jonescon>]

### Pandemonium XI I I, Jan. 20-21 \*

Ryerson Polytechnic University/Ryerson Hub Cafeteria, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$20 preregistered before 1/5/96, \$25 on site. Write: Peter Fund, 34-118 Roncesvalles Ave., Toronto, Ontario M6R 2K8, Canada.

### Atcon '96, Jan. 26-28 TX

Ramada Inn, Austin, Tex. Special guests are Allen Varney, and Jean and Bruce Rabe. Events include role-playing card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGA Network events, and a charity auction. Deadline for pre-registration is Jan. 10. Registration: \$15 preregistered for RPGA members, \$12 for GOAT members; \$20 at the door. Write: GOAT 3816 South Lamar #2019, Austin, TX 78704.

### Conline XX, Jan. 27-28 GENie

This convention will be held online in the TSR Online Round Table on GENie. Special events include both LIVING CITY™ and LIVING JUNGLE™ Tournaments, in addition to guest speakers to take questions. For more information send e-mail to: KNIGHTS@genie.geis.com.

### Cremecon 2, Feb. 2-4, WI

Manchester East Hotel & Suites in Glendale Wisc. Guests include Lawrence Watt-Evans, Sue Weinlein, C.H. Burnett, and Richard Russell. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, an art show, a masquerade ball, and workshops. Registration: \$20 preregistered before Jan. 6, \$30 on site, single day rates available. Write to: CREMECON 2, P.O. Box 37986, Milwaukee, WI 53237, or e-mail: cremecon@aol.com.

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- \* Canadian convention
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### Important:

DRAGON® Magazine does not publish phone numbers for conventions. Be certain that any address you send us is complete and correct.

To ensure that your convention listing makes it into our files, enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard with your first convention notice; we will return the card to show that it was received. You also might send a second notice one week after mailing the first. Mail your listing as early as possible, and always keep us informed of any changes. Please do not send convention notices by fax, as this method has not proven reliable.

**Hurricon, Feb. 2-4** FL  
Holiday Inn Beach Resort in Ft. Walton, Fla. Guests include Clive Barker, Philip Jose Fanner, Peter S. Beagle, and Brian LeBlanc. Events include role-playing card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments, and a charity auction to benefit the Red Cross Hurricane Relief Fund. Registration: \$30 preregistered before Jan. 15, \$35 thereafter. Write: Hurricon, 328 N. Eglin Pkwy., Ft. Walton Beach, FL 32547

**Winter War XXIII, Feb. 2-4** IL  
Chancellor Hotel in Champaign, Ill. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, an auction, and a miniatures painting contest. Registration: \$6 preregistered, \$8 on site. Write: Donald McKinney, 986 Pomona Drive, Champaign, IL 61821.

**Clubcon V, Feb. 3-4** OH  
Richfield Holiday Inn-Holidome in Richfield, Ohio. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments, workshops, and films. Registration: \$14.95 Write: The Club, P.O. Box 3575, Kent, OH 44240.

**Magnum Opus Con-10A, Feb. 15-18** GA  
Adam's Mark Hotel in Charlotte, North Car. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, panels, an auction, a lip sync contest, a psychic hot line, and much more. Write to: MOC-10A P.O. Box 6585, Athens GA 30604, or e-mail: MOC@IXnetcom.com.

**Prezcon, Feb. 15-18** VA  
The Best Western Mount Vernon Hotel in Charlottesville, Va. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments. Registration: \$15 preregistered before Jan. 15, \$20 on site. Write: Justin Thompson, P.O. Box 4661, Charlottesville, VA 22905.

**War '96, Feb. 15-18** NC  
Adam's Mark Hotel in Charlotte, N.C. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments and prizes. Registration: \$25 for the Con and \$50 per game entered. Write: National Association for Professional Gamers, P.O. Box 6585, Athens, GA 30604, or e-mail: MOC@IX.netcom.com.

**Dundracon XX Feb. 16-19** CA  
San Ramon Marriott Hotel in San Ramon, Calif. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments, dealers, and a flea market. Registration: \$20 preregis-

tered before Dec. 31, \$35 on site. Write: Dunracon, 1145 Talbot St., Albany, CA 94706.

**Orccon 19, Feb. 16-19** CA  
LA Airport Wyndham Hotel in Los Angeles, Calif. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a flea market, dealers, and an auction. Registration: \$15 preregistered, \$30 on site. Write: Strategicon 333 N. San Fernando Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 91502.

**Total Confusion X '96, Feb. 22-25** MA  
Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel in Marlboro, Mass. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a dinner theatre production and a miniatures painting contest. Registration: \$12/day on site. Write: Total Confusion, P.O. Box 604, North Oxford, MA 01537

**Jaxcon '96, Feb. 23-25** FL  
The Ramada Inn Conference Center in Jacksonville, Flor. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments, dealers, a painting contest, and a flea market. Registration: \$22/weekend, daily rates available. Write: Jaxcon, P.O. Box 14218, Jacksonville, FL 32238, or e-mail: Jaxcon@aol.com.

**Bashcon '96, Feb. 23-25** OH  
The University of Toledo Student Union in Toledo Ohio. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include an art show, films, and workshops. Registration: \$6 on site or \$2.50/day. Write: UT-Bash, 2801 West Bancroft St., Toledo, OH 43606.

**Johncon '96, Mar. 1-3** MD  
Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryl. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include seminars, a comic book auction, dealers, and an art show and auction. Registration: \$30 preregistered, \$40 on site. Write: John Hopkins University, JonCon, c/o Office of Student Activities, 122 Merryman Hll, 3400 Charles St., Baltimore, MD 21218.

**Con of the North, Mar. 8-10** MN  
The Landmark Center in St. Paul, Minn. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments. Registration: \$15. Write: Con of the North, P.O. Box 18096, Minneapolis MN 55418,

**Katsucon Two, Mar. 8-10** VA  
The Holiday Inn Executive Center in Virginia Beach, Va., Katsucon is a conven-

tion devoted to Japanese Animation and Manga. Special guests include Steve Bennett, John Ott, Bruce Lewis, Tim Eldred, Michael Ling, and Richard Kim. Registration: \$35 preregistered, \$40 on site. Write: Katsu Productions, P.P. Box 11582, Blacksburg, VA 24060, or e-mail: Katsucon@vtserf.cc.vt.edu.

**CGC Game Auction, Mar. 9** CT  
Comfort Inn of Darien in Darien Conn. Write: CGC, P.O. Box 403, Fairfield CT 06430.

**Nova 21, Mar. 16-17** MN  
Oakland Center on the Oakland University Campus in Rochester, Minn. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments, anime, and dealers. Registration: \$8 preregistered, \$10 on site. Write: Order of Leibowitz, Oakland University, 49 Oakland Center, Rochester, MN 48309, or e-mail: jjputman@oakland.edu.

**Contamination, Mar. 22-24** \*  
Raddison Hotel in London Ontario, Canada. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments and interactive gaming. Registration: \$14. Write: Western Gaming Society, Room 340, UCC University of Western Ontario, London Ontario, Canada, N6A 3K7, or e-mail: gaming@mustang.uwo.ca.

**Coastcon XIX, Mar. 22-24** MS  
Mississippi Gulf Coast Coliseum & Convention Center, West Beach Blvd., Biloxi, Miss. Guests include Elizabeth Moon, Michael Stackpole, Tim Beach, and Tom Dupre. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments, dealers, a costume contest, art show and auction, and a talent show. Registration: \$25 preregistered before 3/1/96, \$30 thereafter. Write: Coastcon XIX, P.O. Box 1423, Biloxi, MS 39533, or e-mail: CoastCon@aol.com.

**Coscon '96, Mar. 22-24** PA  
Days Inn Conference Center in Butler, Penn. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments, dealers, and an auction. Registration: \$15 before 3/1/96, \$20 thereafter. Write: Circle of Swords, P.O. Box 2126, Butler, PA 16003.

**Neovention XV, Mar. 22-24** OH  
Gardner Student Center at the University of Akron in Akron, Ohio. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$15/weekend or \$6/day. Write: University Gaming Society,

Gardner Student Center #6, University of Akron, Akron, OH 44325.

**Midsouthcon 15, Mar. 22-24** TN  
Brownstone Hotel in Memphis, Tenn. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include SF guests, dealers, an art show and auction, and more. Registration: \$25 before 3/1/96, \$25 thereafter. Write: Midsouthcon, P.O. Box 11446, Memphis, TN 38111.

**Technicon 13, Mar. 22-24** VA  
Best Western Red Lion Inn in Blacksburg, VA. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a dance, an art show and auction, dealers, and films. Registration: \$20, Write: Technicon 13, c/o VTSFFC, P.O. Box 256, Balcksburg, VA 24063.

**Egyptian Campaign '96, Mar. 29-31** IL  
The Southern Illinois University's Student Center in Carbondale, Ill. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include an auction and a painting contest. Registration: \$10 preregistered, \$12 on site. Write: Egyptian Campaign, c/o Strategic Games Society, Office of Student Development, 3rd. Floor Student Center, Carbondale, IL 62901.

**Norman Conquest VI I, Mar. 29-31** OK  
Dale Hall, The University of Oklahoma Campus in Norman, Oklahoma. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments. Registration: \$9. Write: Norman Conquest VIII, 215-A OMU P.O. Box 304, 900 Asp Avenue, Norman OK 73019.

**Spring Offensive VI, Mar. 29-31** IL  
Illinois Central College in Peoria Ill, Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Write: The Game Room, 1293 Peoria St., Washington, IL 61571.

**East Coast Hobby Show '96, Mar. 30-Apr. 1** PE  
Ft. Washington Expo Center in Philadelphia, Penn. Write: East Coast Hobby Show, 4400 N. Federal Highway, Suite 210, Boca Raton, FL 33431.

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Tales of the Fifth Age



# Kindling

by Jean Rabe

*illustrated by Terry Dykstra*

SC 2:

In the second year after the Second Cataclysm,  
we began to rebuild Ansalon. Pilgrims  
and priests continued to seek after their gods in vain.  
Magic was like a dim memory. The Misty Isle  
was laid waste, and a new terror appeared  
in our midst...

from the Chronicles of Nathal, compiled in SC 31.

"It has been quiet."

The creature stood on a peak overlooking Palanthas. "Much too quiet."

It looked vaguely like a man, tall and thin, but it was solid black as if it were an upright shadow. Its red eyes peered down at the city, staring at the battered buildings and the people who shuffled between them.

"But the quiet will not last," it hissed. "I will not let it."

The creature shifted its shape with those words, taking on a pale, practically colorless tint, swirling wisps of fog coalesced into a manlike form. "I will give them another war. A terrible, frightening, devastating war. They will not recover from this one."

The War of the Lance ended three decades ago and was now a legend gathering songs and dust. It was a battle that made heroes and brought the races of Ansalon together.

The Chaos War that birthed the creature was but two years ago. In the heat of the struggle, deep in the Abyss, the Chaos god shattered a sun. From the flaming fragments of rock that resulted he formed the creature and its evil brethren — agents of Chaos, daemon warriors held together by peoples' worst nightmares.

Most of the daemon warriors had died in the battle — the battle in which the people of Ansalon were eventually triumphant. Still, it had been devastating to all the inhabitants of Krynns.

*Had been*, the daemon warrior emphasized as it grew foggy claws and a snakelike tail that whipped about its now-transparent ankles. It hadn't taken the people long to lick their wounds and begin their recovery. They mourned the many heroes who died in the Chaos War, and they honored the pitiful Knights of Solamnia and the Knights of Takhisis who fought side by side against the giant form Chaos had assumed.

No one mourned for Chaos and his shape-shifting children. Indeed, the people of Ansalon rejoiced at their passing. No one mourned — except the creature who glowered at Palanthas and plotted revenge.

When everything settled after the war and the wounded were separated from the dead, the humans, elves, dwarves, kender, and gnomes came to realize that all the gods had abandoned Krynns — abandoned them. Still, they would not give in; still they went on pilgrimage, seeking to find and contact their gods. And it was futile.

They grudgingly conceded that magic was gone from their world, that even the simplest of spells could no longer be cast.

Despite it all, they were healing.

They were getting on with their lives in what they were beginning to call "the Age of Mortals."

"They are all so..." the warrior searched for a word, then inhaled sharply. "Complacent. Unprepared for the slaughter to come."

The daemon warrior's hollow eyes turned toward the expansive Palanthas harbor. A soft breeze sent ripples across the bay. The sun was beginning to set and was coating the water with a fiery orange glow that reminded the creature of smouldering embers — like the bits of the broken sun that birthed it.

"The fire is coming," the creature whispered.

Down on the docks the fishermen were unloading the day's catch — crates and nets filled with quipper and sea bass. The men were joking, discussing how they'd spend their wages and what they would do this evening. Normal lives. Somewhere behind them the delicate sounds of a flute spilled from the open window of an inn. A woman's soft laughter and a child's squeals of delight competed with the melody. Venison stew was cooking nearby. The scent hung tantalizing in the air. Healing.

"Yes, the fire is coming. And the feast is about to begin."

\* \* \*

Slick black nostrils quivered and sniffed as they poked out from beneath the leafy curtain of a massive weeping willow.

Deer.

The early evening breeze was blowing toward the hunter, cloaking his own scent but revealing the presence of his succulent quarry. A small herd was nearby, and he licked his glossy black lips in anticipation. His scaly midnight head edged past the willow curtain, and his large round eyes peered through the foliage beyond. Just above the top of the tall marsh grass, the dragon spied the tips of antlers. They were softly illuminated by the rays of a dying sun that hung in the sky so low before the ever-present clouds.

Several bucks, the black dragon noted.

He fervently hoped there were young with them.

The black dragon craved the taste of deer. He loved it more than the flesh of men and more than the cattle the men bred and caged and that were so easy to catch. Too easy. Perhaps deer tasted better because they were harder to snare. The chase made the meal more palatable.

The black dragon loved young deer most of all. At the moment, he wanted nothing more than to fill

his considerable belly with a few small savory does and delectable fawns. The dragon was relatively young himself, as far as dragons go. He wasn't yet so large that he needed to feast on the entire herd. Besides, he knew if he ate all of them now there would be none for tomorrow.

Tucking his wings close to his body, he slunk forward like a cat, his claws pulling him almost soundlessly across the damp ground. Rain splashed lightly over his scales. It was always raining here.

Only the dragon's horns stuck above the rangy grass as he crept forward. He didn't need to see where he was going. The dragon knew the damp forests of Misty Isle intimately, every rise and fall of the land, every wonderfully fetid fen, and every moss-draped giant tree. He knew where the rocky cliffs dropped off practically straight to the sea below, and where the veil of mist that surrounded most of the island was the thickest.

He moved closer, then he blinked. It was suddenly darker, as if the sun had vanished from the sky several minutes prematurely. But then the darkness lifted — almost as quickly as it had come — and the sun's faint orange glow returned. The sun had edged behind a cloud, the black dragon decided.

But the clouds were high above the sun. The sky was empty along the horizon.

Or was it?

He snapped his black head above the marsh grass to glance up, and in that instant the herd of deer saw him and bolted. The dragon cursed his curiosity and lunged after them. His muscular legs churned over the ground, throwing great chunks of grass and mud behind him and propelling him quickly forward.

The dragon was nearly sixty feet long from nose to tail, and with his wings held in close to his scaly body he could move surprisingly fast. The deer scattered before the black menace, spreading wide in several directions like the fingers of a flailing, outstretched hand.

The dragon followed a group of small does, already imagining the taste of their sweet, tender flesh. One well-aimed stream of his acid breath could fell them all, and for the briefest of moments the dragon considered belching one. But the acid would eat away at his prey, strip it of its juice and leave him less to eat. Most of all the acid would detract from the joy of the hunt, end it too soon and without much sport. He enjoyed the challenge.

His thick legs pumped harder, carrying him closer to the panicked deer. Extending his scaly neck, his jaws jerked open and clacked closed, nearly catching one of the youngest. He could imagine the

horror in the does' tiny wide eyes, and he could smell their fear—it was so strong it was nearly palpable. He could smell something else, too, but he couldn't quite place the scent, and he hadn't the time to contemplate what it was. Faster, he urged himself, as his quarry cleared the marsh grass and started across a small plain. Beyond the plain stretched the oldest forest on the island. The trees there were more than a hundred feet tall and they were bigger around than the dragon. The mist hung so thick on that part of the island that it looked as if a cloud was hugging the ground. It would be easier for the deer to hide there, so the dragon knew he had to catch them before they cleared the plain and were swallowed by the mist.

To the left and right of the plain were cliffs that dropped steeply to the sea. Sheer and rocky, they kept wingless creatures back. The deer would not run toward the cliffs, the dragon knew.

The black's heart pounded in his chest as he bore down on a small doe, the slowest of the lot. His jaws closed about her and swiftly ended her life. He had not intended to be merciful, he was merely hungry. The black practically swallowed her whole, allowing himself only a few bites of her soft flesh before renewing his charge after the others.

The rest of the fleeing does bounded farther across the plain, racing closer toward the giant trees. The dragon mused that they looked like dancing charcoal silhouettes against the little slice of sun that was left. Had the dragon not been so hungry, he might have slowed his pace and appreciated the view.

Instead, he churned his legs ever faster, extended his neck, and scooped two does into his maw. These he savored for only a few heartbeats before dashing after a fawn that stood quivering in the open, separated from the rest.

The dragon closed the distance to the tiny morsel that was paralyzed by fright, that had eyes wide with fear. Then he shook his big head in puzzlement and stopped running. Again the sky had grown instantly darker. Ignoring the fawn for a moment, he stared to the left, past the cliffs and toward where the sun should be. His great jaw fell open in astonishment.

Blotting out the sunset was an enormous dragon, one larger than any he had seen before. With scales colored a deep crimson, like wet blood, she hovered in the sky and returned the black's stare.

The red dragon's wings were stretched out to her sides, billowed like the sails of a schooner and practically filling the sky. The black had to turn his head from side to side just to take in all of her. Her wings beat only slightly to keep her aloft, yet the breeze

created by them was strong, rustling the leaves on the great trees nearby and flattening the grass on the plain. The wind washed over the black's face and made the rain rush at him in sheets.

Her glistening ivory horns rose tall and gently curving from atop her massive ridged head. Her amber eyes were unblinking orbs that practically glowed and held him mesmerized. Steam curled upward from her cavernous nostrils and disappeared somewhere overhead.

The creature was at once beautiful and terrifying, and — the fawn forgotten — the black dragon rose on his hind legs. He wanted to meet this immense red. Had to meet her and talk to her. The red must be centuries upon centuries old to be so huge, the black realized. She was easily more than four hundred feet long.

*She is as large as Takhisis was, he thought, perhaps even larger.*

*Takhisis?*

His heart leapt.

Perhaps the red *is* Takhisis — the Dark Queen of the evil dragons — returned to Krynn to lead her scaly children!

The black knew if any of the gods were to return it would be Takhisis.

He breathed a stream of acid into the air in tribute, and the great red glided forward. She was no longer blocking the sun, and the black could see her better, though he had to continue to crane his neck this way and that to see all of her. The dying fiery rays touched her scales and made them glimmer like flickering flames, made her look as if she were a massive bonfire brought to life. The triangular ridge of scales that ran along her back looked like a mountain range, the black mused, and her claws gleamed dully and impressively.

*To have claws so grand!* he thought as he edged forward. *She has to be Takhisis. Only a god could be so huge.*

He reverently bowed his head as her claws touched the plain. The ground trembled from her weight, and the black squinted as mud showered all about him, thrown everywhere by the draft from her wings.

He wondered how to address her. Should he praise her immediately? Should he ask how he could serve her? Should he...

The black's thoughts were cut off as a gout of flame arced through the sky above him, fanning out to touch the forests on both sides of the plain. The searing heat of the red's fire breath was intense and painful, and he heard the snap and crackle of the trees to his right and left that had caught fire despite the dampness of the Misty Isle and the rain.

The black looked up and opened his mouth to speak, and saw a red claw stretching out toward him.

*She means to touch me! Honor me, he thought. Takhisis means to...*

The claw struck him hard, sending him flying several yards toward the old forest. The impact knocked the air from the black's lungs. Dazed, he shook his head to clear his senses and stared at her. He was close to the fire. It was just above and behind him. The hot air and the charred wood stung his nose and made his eyes water. Steam was everywhere.

"My queen, have I offended you?" he asked as he slunk toward her, humbled.

The great dragon cocked her head.

Again he bowed, and again a blood-red paw shot out.

This time the black's preservation instinct took over, and he tried to dodge; but the red dragon's massive claws followed his path and raked his side. Blade sharp, they slashed through his thick dark scales and dug into the softer flesh beneath. Then a claw pinned him to the ground, and the weight of her tree-trunk leg pressed down on him and threatened to crush his ribs.

The black dragon's blood flowed from the wound, feeling hot and wet against his side, wetter than the rain. He cried in surprise and pain and struggled futilely beneath the weight. Through a haze of tears he looked up, his eyes locking onto hers, pleading with her, questioning.

He tried to speak, but he could barely even breathe.

Her immense head filled his vision, more than filled his vision as it bore down on him. And the smell of her breath was hot and sulphurous like the fire that was now raging in the old forest.

She snarled, sounding like a hundred lions, and he watched in horror as a drop of saliva rolled over the edge of her lower lip and, hissing like steam, pooled and sizzled on the ground at his feet.

She opened her mouth again, and her enormous tongue snaked out to touch the tip of his nose, then retreated to lick her lips.

"No!" the black screamed. "Takhisis would not slay one of her own!" *But if she is not Takhisis, he thought, who is she? Why would she attack me?*

He summoned all his strength and fought to budge the claw that held him to the ground, but he couldn't move it, so massive was the red.

"Please!" he cried as he gasped for air. "Please!" he called again, surprised to hear such a human word escape his jaws, but desperate that she would listen.

The red shifted her weight, and the black seized the opportunity and lurched forward, rolling toward her and barely squeezing out from beneath her paw. He shot under her belly and ran toward the western cliff, cringing when he heard her inhale. Reaching the edge, he dove over the side, his claws scrabbling over the sheer rocky face and his wings beating to help him glide. He landed roughly on a stretch of sand at the base, and pulling himself to his feet he rushed forward into the water — just as flames arced where the crest of his back had been a heartbeat ago.

The cool sea closed about the black, and his side stung where the salt water lapped around the gouges her claws had made. He heard a boom of thunder and glanced over his scaly shoulder.

It wasn't thunder. It was the flapping of the red's wings. She was flying over the edge of the cliff and coming toward him. He swallowed hard and struggled toward deeper water, the open Courrain Ocean.

She was so massive. Where did she come from?

He swam out farther, still looking behind him as he went, and he saw her glide over the squat beach and enter the sea — but just a little way. She stepped in only up to her dewclaws and looked disdainfully at the water. The black breathed a sigh of relief. He was safe. Reds did not care for the water.

But then she began beating her wings. The sound of the scaly leather flapping was incredibly loud, and the gust of wind her wings generated made the sea froth and the black dragon rock and pitch like a ship tossed by a violent storm.

The water rose in wild, crashing waves all about him, as she beat her wings harder still. The black struggled against the unnatural current, then he gasped as she breathed fire again. Her flames struck the water near him, and the sea boiled from the incredible heat. Great billows of steam rolled off the surface in all directions, thick as a cloud, thicker than the mist that hugged Misty Isle. The black yowled in agony. He was being cooked alive!

She continued to beat her wings, and the sea surged in a great swell. Her wings were flapping so forcefully now she was creating her own storm. The wind was whipping madly about, and the water was rushing away from the island, driven in a great wave by her onslaught.

Within moments, the black dragon found himself in what had become a shallow tide pool. His claws scrabbled in the sand, and he tried to drag himself out where the water was deeper, where the red's wings couldn't beat it all away.

Despite the pain in his side and the fear rising in

his thick throat, the black rushed farther from the shore. Deeper water was close, so very close. His legs churned over the heavy, wet sand, and he increased the distance between himself and the enormous red. The blessed water was closing around him again. The sea was up to his chest now, and his claws continued to dig into the sand, urging him faster still, propelling him farther away.

*Just a little more*, his mind coaxed his tired legs.

*Reds don't like the water. Just a little.*

Behind him, the red dragon edged into the sea until the water lapped about her belly. Her slavering mouth shot forward, and her jagged teeth sunk into his trailing tail. She continued to beat her wings to keep the water at bay as she slowly pulled her thrashing prize back toward the shore.

The black's eyes were wide with terror, were like the eyes of the fawn he spotted on the plain minutes before. His heart beat frantically, hammering thunderously in his chest, and his back legs jerked spasmodically. He tried desperately to find one last purchase in the sand, something his claws could grasp and act as an anchor to keep him from her. He swiveled his head about, and summoning all his strength breathed a stream of his acid at the red. The acid splashed against the side of her head and made a sickening popping noise. Her jaws relaxed their grip, and the black launched himself toward the sea again.

This time he was stopped by a paw that slammed down on his tail. Another slammed down on his rump, then he felt sharp teeth close over the ridge on his back, and he felt himself being lifted.

The red carried him toward the beach and threw him harshly down on the sand. Lying in a heap, the black had little energy left. He labored to rise, and he almost succeeded, but her lengthy tailed whipped about from behind her and struck him soundly across the snout, stunning him.

He concentrated, hoping to summon one final stream of acid — something, anything that might drive her back so he could fly above the cliff and escape into the trees of the old forest. He was so much smaller than she, perhaps he could hide among the ancient trees. He opened his maw, breathed, but only a rivulet of acid rose from his throat. It sloshed onto the sand and sizzled and popped.

Those were the last sounds the black heard.

The red's jaws loomed closer, sank deep into his throat, and she began to feast.

\* \* \*

The dawning sun found the shore of the Misty Isle. None of the verdant forests remained — only charred sticks that once were century-old trees and which stretched upward at twisted, odd angles through the mist and the still-falling rain. The red had destroyed everything.

Yawning, the great dragon rose from the beach, stretched, and shook off her sleep. The meal of the big black lizard satisfied her a little last night — gave her enough energy so she could hunt the rest of the small island. She had feasted on a herd of deer she found, though they had been so small. She found a few other animals, too, and they helped ease her rumbling belly.

But she was still hungry, ravenous — and disturbed.

Had she imagined the black lizard talking to her? Uttering “please?” Calling her... what was the word... Takhisis?

Had she dreamed the words?

Or had the lizard really spoken? Had she dined on a sentient reptile?

She glanced at the tide pool where she left the lizard’s head and a few of its rib bones. The carcass looked a little different in the morning light. She studied it, able to make out more of the details, then she shuddered.

It wasn’t the head of a large black lizard that lay at a grotesque angle against the slope. It was the head of a black dragon.

*A young one, she thought. Very young. Too bad.*

Padding to the water’s edge, the great red glanced at the surface. Her scowling visage reflected back at her, and she noted that a few of the scales near her jaw were melted and deformed from the young blacks acid breath.

It hadn’t put up much of a fight, she thought. Its lack of a struggle, coupled with her hunger, had contributed to the deed.

She reached a claw up and dug the blemished scales loose. They fell on the sand with a dull thud, and she grimaced. Others would grow to take their place, and again she would look perfect, but it would take a few weeks.

*At least it was a black, an inferior dragon, she told herself. Blacks aren’t as fierce as reds, or as smart.*

If it had been smart, it wouldn’t have waited for her on the plain, it would have slithered away and hid in the forest. It should have known to run before an obviously superior force.

What had it meant when it called her Takhisis? What did the word mean?

By the time the sun had reached its zenith, the great red was high in the sky and the Misty Isle was far below her. The island seemed so small.

Like the black dragon had been so small.

The farther she flew the more she thought, and the closer she studied the land below her. She was far from home, so delightfully far. And everything here seemed new and different.

And appetizing. She was hungry again.

She had capsized a three-masted ship less than a third her size before spotting the black and landing on the island. The red had swallowed the struggling sailors without a second thought. The men looked odd with heads that were shaped like bulls’. But they were not very filling.

Maybe she should go back home, she considered. The food seemed more plentiful there — at least it didn’t take so much of it to fill her rumbling belly. She didn’t care for the brutish company of the other reds, but perhaps she would try to put up with it again. She could force herself. One more try. She hated this sensation of hunger.

Raising a wing, she banked toward the east. Toward home.

“Do not leave.”

The red’s eyes snapped open and focused on the swirling gray image of a man that hovered in the air. She drew her wings back and hung suspended like a red cloud, and she squinted so she could see the creature better. It looked like a shadow, which shouldn’t be given the brightness of the sun and that there was nothing nearby to cast such a shadow. The man’s eyes were unblinking red dots. Not a man, she decided. But what is it? She heard the creature clearly — despite its size and its apparent lack of a mouth. In fact, its voice sounded like it was coming from inside her head.

The red hissed. Steam rose from her nostrils, the wispy tendrils curling like pipe smoke and drifting toward the clouds overhead. Her lips twisted upward and she snarled. She could eat him, but he was so small her belly wouldn’t notice his presence. It would hardly be worth the effort of swallowing.

“What are you?” she asked, irritated.

“I am a daemon warrior, a creation of Chaos,” the shadow man answered. “I will have my revenge, and you are my means of achieving it.”

The dragon stared at the shadowy image and watched as it grew horns and darkened itself to a glossy black shade, like a sheet of solid, wet slate. The creature should be begging for mercy, not playing and shifting its form and chatting with her. It should be pleading for its life.

*Like the black begged last night, she thought.*

“Where are you from?” the warrior asked. His voice was gravelly and at the same time hollow sounding. “You are not from Ansalon, and you are not a creature of Chaos, like me. And you have not

been here long. Someone would have noticed a dragon your size before. Heroes would have been dispatched to slay you. Where, indeed, did you come from? Are there more like you?"

The red didn't answer — wouldn't answer — that particular question. Instead, she narrowed her eyes to thin slits and glowered at him. A lick of flame flickered out between her pointed teeth. This creature was annoying, and it would end up sliding down her throat anyway if it persisted.

"Where?"

"Where I am from is none of your concern," the dragon finally answered.

"But where you are going is. You must go there —" it pointed back the other way — toward Ansalon, not away from it."

"Enough!" A growl sounded from deep in the dragon's chest. She opened her mouth and fire raced out of it, cutting through the crisp morning air and forming a great ball of searing flame. The fire rushed toward him, roaring and crackling, then it parted just inches before it reached him, flowing like water around his black body and joining together again behind him.

"I am a creature of fire. Flames cannot touch me, no matter how intense." The daemon warrior formed glowing eyes, hot like coals. "Now listen to me. Down there is the Misty Isle, the island you slept on last night and treated as so much kindling. To the north is Kothas. It is perched on the edge of the Blood Sea of Istar."

The dragon glared at him, a hint of curiosity creeping across her enormous visage.

"Kothas is not as important as the rest of the place," the daemon warrior continued. "Neither are Mithas and Karthay. But the Dairly Plains." The glow of the creature's eyes softened. "There are herds of cattle to satisfy your appetite, villages ripe for terrorizing, and there are smaller dragons."

Did he know about the black? she wondered.

"That is where I want you to begin."

"Begin what?"

"A war against the people."

"I go where I want, when I want. I do what I want."

"You will teach them they should not have defied Chaos," the warrior replied. "They should not have forced my father to leave."

"No one tells me what to do."

"I am telling you." The creature's blackness lifted, and the shadowy gray returned. "I am telling you to devastate Ansalon. To slay the humans and elves. The people will no longer be the dominant force in the land. You will — with my direction."

"And the dragons?"

"The dragons are scattered. With their goddess Takhisis gone they have no leader. A few of the dragons challenge the people, but not many."

*So Takhisis is a goddess, the red thought. The black thought me a goddess.*

The daemon warrior nodded.

"You will lead the other dragons. I will show you how."

*I could lead the dragons, she thought. I could rule this Ansalon. This land is ripe for conquest.*

"The Dairly Plains..." The words hissed out of her mouth like steam.

"...is where you will start. The people on the Dairly Plains are unsuspecting. Unprepared. Kindling."

"There is land beyond these Dairly Plains?" the red hissed.

"Of course," the shadow man replied. "After you strike there, I will instruct you where next to travel. Do you have a name? I would know what to call my impressive pawn."

The dragon furrowed its considerable brow.

"Malystrix. My name is Malystrix."

"Malys," the shadow man pronounced, finding the shorter word more accommodating. Again the daemon warrior gestured toward the Dairly Plains.

The dragon's eyes followed the creature's foggy fingers, then she looked up and met its hollow ruby gaze. Her paw shot out, surprisingly swift, striking the warrior. Claws raked through its shadowy image.

Malys saw the surprise on its visage, and she felt the stinging cold on her pads as her claws tore at the form.

The daemon warrior gasped and she brought her massive head in closer, her furnace-hot breath scalding the air about its shredded body. Again she brought up her claws, and again she cut through the creature's quavering form, feeling the cold.

"Fire might not harm you," Malys hushed. "But there are other ways to slay." Opening her maw, she edged closer still, and her teeth closed about the dying daemon warrior. It was cold at first, suffusing her body, then she was suddenly warm again. She felt its heavy body slide down her throat. She folded her great wings in close to her body, dropped through the sky, and angled herself toward the coastline of the Dairly Plains.

*I shall begin there, she thought, but on my terms. And these Dairly Plains shall be just the beginning.*



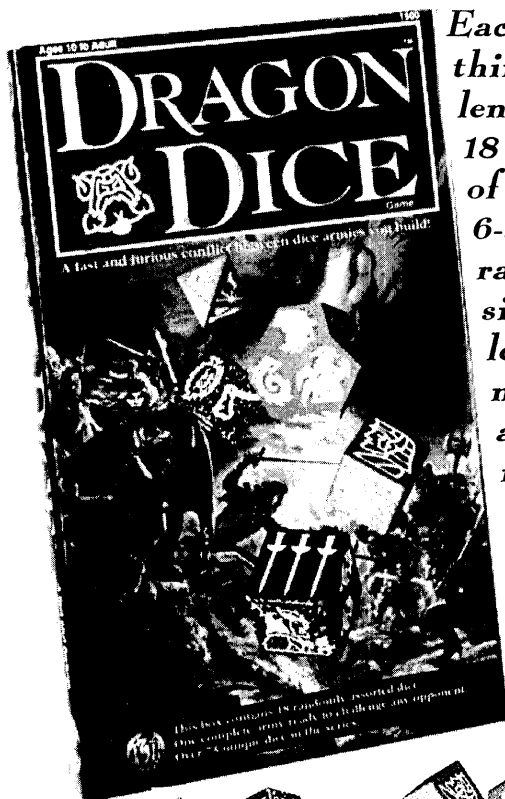
*Jean Rabe is the author of several fantasy novels for TSR. She is currently hard at work on the first novel to tell of the Fifth Age of Krynn.*



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# Rogue's GALLERY

## ROS D'Naleri

by Robert Martin

9th-level warrior, 9th-level mage

STRENGTH: 17  
 DEXTERITY: 11  
 CONSTITUTION: 13  
 INTELLIGENCE: 17  
 WISDOM: 13  
 CHARISMA: 14  
 AC: 3 (elven chain +1, and shield)  
 THAC0: 13 (12 with Str bonus)  
 MOVE: 9"  
 HIT POINTS: 42  
 ALIGNMENT: NC  
 SPECIAL ATTACKS: Nil  
 SPECIAL DEFENSES: Nil  
 MAGIC RESISTANCE: Elven ability (see below)  
 SIZE: 5' 5"

**Special Abilities/Bonuses:** +1 hit, +1 dmg.; +1 to hit with long and short swords (elven ability); spells to 8th level; 90% sleep/charm resistant; 60' infravision;

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Long sword (specialization), short sword, broadsword, bastard sword, longbow, dagger (thrown), dagger.

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Ancient and modern history, dancing, etiquette, falconry, gem appraisal, hunting, languages (ancient and modern), poetry, reading/writing, riding (land-based), survival.

**Physical Appearance:** D'Naleri is 120 but appears to humans to be in his early 30s. He is a grey elf, with long black hair which is usually hidden under his hood or helmet. He is 5'5" tall, and he weighs 130 pounds. When adventuring or out of his palace grounds, he usually wears his magical *elven chain mail* under his armorial surcoat. At other times, he usually wears luxuriant robes (over which he has cast an *armor* spell).

**Background:** D'Naleri is the fourth son of Valedmor, a grey elf prince, and nephew of Nar-Valedron, king of Arandor. D'Naleri was tutored in the palace by the greatest mages, scholars, and sages in the kingdom. His life in the royal court was one of ease and splendor. Then one day Valedmor was falsely accused of involvement in a palace conspiracy, so he and his family were banished from Arandor. They were able to take much of their wealth and personal property with them to exile. Though decades later the true culprits were exposed and Valedmor pardoned and welcomed home, D'Naleri never forgave his uncle for the incident and refused to return. He took his share of the family wealth and remained in the kingdom of Arnithal. Though he has mellowed over the years, he still nurses a grudge with his family and is generally distrusting of other grey elves. Finding his wealth and books little solace, he turned to adventuring. He started alone, with hired mercenaries at his back, but soon



became part of a band of seasoned campaigners. The duties of his estate have pretty much forced his retirement from campaigning, but every now and then his major domo goes to awaken him only to find a cryptic note from D'Naleri indicating some destination.

**Equipment:** D'Naleri is a seasoned adventurer who carries just about everything one could ever expect to need in a *portable* hole he keeps tucked into a hidden flap in his belt pouch.

**Magical Items:** Longsword +1, *flametongue* (bastard sword), *ring of flying*, *ring of spell turning*, *elven chain mail* +1, *portable hole*, *wand of lightning*. He also carries several potions, and writes his own scrolls as he needs them. He carries a dagger with a *permanent continual light* cast on the blade.

**Spells:** D'Naleri is fond of the Enchantment and Alteration schools. He prefers not to use magic *per se* in combat, as he would rather fight his opponents face to face.

**Role-playing Notes:** Despite his wealth and upbringing, D'Naleri is no snob. His own experiences as a social outcast have colored his perceptions to the point where he is likely to take great risks to support the rights of an underdog against any foe. D'Naleri is uninterested in general socializing or romance, preferring the company of a good (old) book. He is fascinated by dwarven lore, architecture, and history, and will go out of his way to befriend dwarves. His greatest weakness is his lust for books and other knowledge on dwarven lore.

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After playing the AD&D® game for 13 years, I must admit that I have some serious problems with the concept of dual-class characters. The rules simply make little sense to me.

According to the *Player's Handbook* (2nd Edition), once a character begins a new class, he cannot use the abilities of his former class without sacrificing all the experience for the particular encounter and half the total experience for the entire adventure. The character is subject to all restrictions of the new class, yet he retains his hit dice from his former class. Also, it states that the character does not forget the abilities of his former class, but rather he is penalized for using them. The rules sound fine theoretically, but realistically they don't hold water. Here is why.

Let us take as an example a fighter named Kirk. He has an 18 Constitution and above average rolls for his hit points. His saving throws and THAC0 are at their best, and at 20th level, Kirk's player decides to dual-class as a mage. Where does Kirk fit in? With a high-level campaign, Kirk would be all but useless and rather boring to run. With his 20 THAC0 and single first-level spell, I can only imagine watching the player try to stay awake during the game. On top of that, it would be conceivable for Kirk to advance five or six levels as a mage with only a few battles. After all: a mage only needs 90,000 experience points to reach 9th level. Still, he would be ridiculous in a low-level campaign. Here is this 1st-level mage running around with 140 hit points, carrying all the magic items he's accumulated throughout a long adventuring career. It goes without saying that the rest of the party would use Kirk as a human shield.

So why would Kirk suddenly have 1 st-level saving throws? According to the *Player's Handbook*, a saving throw represents an "instinctive act on the part of the character." If the act is indeed instinctive, why would Kirk ignore those instincts and allow himself to be engulfed by a *fireball*? Under the section

of dual-classed characters, the *PHB* mentions that by not using a former ability, the character is "unlearning" what he once knew.

Instincts, however, are not learned: they are innate. They can only be improved. Forcing Kirk to use a save of 12 instead of six implies that switching class has forced him to "unlearn" an instinct, which doesn't make any sense.

This is especially true when it involves the most basic instinct of all: survival and self-preservation. When one considers that instinctive behavior is not learned but rather practiced, it becomes conceivable that Kirk's training as a mage has dulled his instincts to some degree (which is reflected in the worsening saving throws), but all it would take would be one *fireball* for those instincts to reassert themselves.

Let us assume that during his fighting career, Kirk had numerous encounters with the *fireball* spell. As he moves up in levels, his instincts to dive out of the way or take cover from the spell improve. This is represented by his improved saving throw. Even if 10 years go by before Kirk sees another *fireball*, the latent instinct to seek cover still exists and would immediately leap to the surface in the face of another such attack no matter what class he would be using. This makes using the first-level mage saving throws a little ridiculous.

As for slipping into old habits, why would Kirk's new mage teacher require him to learn new habits? It is perfectly obvious that Kirk's old instincts as a fighter are far superior to anything the mage could teach him, and no worthy teacher would force his student to play stupid in the face of possible death, when Kirk could have easily avoided the *fireball* using his former abilities. Along those same lines, why would Kirk be forced to use a first-level mage's THAC0? Since the *PHB* specifically states that the character doesn't forget former abilities, the only explanation for this would be that Kirk was going out of his way to fight poorly with a dagger to avoid losing experience.

This, of course, is ludicrous. If Kirk is already proficient with the dagger, why would he not retain his fighter THAC0? Even if he wasn't proficient, the only penalty he should receive is the standard -2 for being "non-proficient" with the dagger. This THAC0 detriment cannot be attributed to training, either. Obviously, a fighter is far more proficient with weapons than a mage, having received

superior training. Therefore, why would a mage waste his time teaching a student how to use a dagger when the student can already best the mage in hand-to-hand combat?

Simply put, how does one suddenly learn to use a dagger less efficiently than before? Having this rule is assuming that Kirk does not pick up a weapon the entire time he undergoes training as a mage, but I feel that interferes with the role-playing potential. If Kirk wishes to practice with his fighter weapons a few hours a night, so be it. This may slow down his mage training, but this factor is already dealt with in the rules for multi-classing: experience is divided evenly between both classes.

Kirk would be seeking out a mage teacher so he could learn to cast spells and not fight with a staff or dagger, since he can already do these and probably better than his teacher. He would be an idiot if he allowed his teacher to instruct him on how to wield a weapon the "wrong" way, and an even bigger idiot if he adopted the practice. Unfortunately, this points to a much larger disadvantage with the AD&D system, one that has caused some I know to abandon AD&D altogether.

When you choose a class for your character, you get given abilities for that class. Kirk, for instance, could not learn how to pick pockets without becoming a full-fledged thief. In other words, he'd have to learn each and every thieving ability just to be able to pick pockets. He would have to quit being a fighter or (in the case of multi-class PCs) divide the experience between the two classes, even if picking pockets was the only ability he ever used. Allowing more diversified characters would please more experienced players, but times have changed, and now TSR tends to cater toward newer, less experienced players.

Pity.

Why can't Kirk learn how to cast spells without being forced to learn how a mage wields a weapon or dives from a *fireball*? I know what you're thinking. Doing this would cause characters to freely acquire all the beneficial abilities of certain classes without receiving any penalties. The DM can compensate by, say, making the character require an extra 50,000 experience points per level to advance. It wouldn't be difficult, and would erase the illogical rules needed to offset the new abilities.

Another flaw is that Kirk would receive no experience points for an

encounter in which he used even a single fighter ability. I can only assume this includes nonweapon proficiencies. The trouble is that all NWP's are open to all classes. Only the slots required to purchase them vary; so how can any nonweapon proficiency be labeled a fighter ability? In addition, experience represents self-improvement through practice. Bearing that in mind, how can Kirk suddenly stop improving his fighter skills? In other words, as a human fighter, Kirk has the potential to advance much higher than 20th level. But because he is dual-classed as a mage, that potential no longer exists. Let us say that Kirk finds himself in over his head. He knows he can't survive by relying on his first level mage abilities, so he casts aside his mage training in favor of his fighter abilities, thus forfeiting his experience points. In the process, he earns 300,000 points, but because these were earned using fighter skills, he does not technically receive them.

This is illogical, since he still physically defeated his enemies, thus improving his ability with weapons; however, for some inexplicable reason, his mage training

somehow blocks that improvement, preventing it from happening. Kirk could kill every fiend in the Abyss and not "learn" a thing from his efforts. This is like saying I cannot study law and martial arts at the same time. Suppose I earn a green belt in karate before going off to law school. The moment I pick up my first book, I can no longer learn anything in karate, no matter how often I practice it. I could study karate for a million years and never advance to black belt until I pass the bar even if I devote equal time to both fields.

Finally, I fail to see the connection between experience points gained in combat and experience points gained in other endeavors. I'm referring to the fact that Kirk would lose half his experience points gained for the entire adventure if he used even a single fighter ability. This rule doesn't work either. The experience points handed out at the end of the adventure are usually given for the completion of certain goals. They are not given out on the basis of how those goals were reached. One could argue that poor role-playing would justify the

loss of experience, but that is an extremely dangerous call.

In my games, I've done away with dual-classed characters completely. A character can become multi-classed whenever the player wishes, or can even opt to learn a single ability from a given class. That way, I don't have 1st-level mages running around with 140 hit points.

Christopher Myers  
5011 Kinter Hill Rd.  
Edinboro, PA 16412

This is in response to two letters that appeared in the Forum of *DRAGON* Magazine #220.

First, to John Holcomb of Ft. Worth: in the immortal words of Morgan Freeman in the movie *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*, "You whine like a mule!" A wise man (either Confucius or Frank Zappa) said, "Change is not only necessary, it is inevitable." Okay, the game has changed in 20 years; if it didn't nobody would play it (except you, perhaps). If you liked the original D&D® game so much, go hunt down Gary Gygax or Dave Arneson. I'm sure Gary would love you.



AD&D is made so you can put in what you want, even rules from other games. Many times I've played in games that borrowed heavily from Rolemaster\* or the Arduin Grimoire\*. Nothing says you have to have everything. I don't allow psionics ever. I've even played in affirmative action games where the DM required one of every race and class in the game. Boring! AD&D will continue to grow and change, and I back TSR on that all the way.

Next, Christopher Kelly of Orlando. I sense that your main focus is the number of female gamers, which is to say, very few. They're out there. An outstanding letter on the subject was written by no less than my ex-wife, Denyse, in *DRAGON Magazine* issue #219. You should see all the replies she's received. She now has a number of pen pals with whom she corresponds regularly.

Kerry Zane  
222 S. Rancho Ave. #54  
San Bernardino, CA 92410

I am writing to respond to Koby Bryan's assertion (in *DRAGON Magazine*, issue #221) that TSR's authors neglect to print quality game material because all they want is to make money.

First of all, anyone who works for any kind of company and wants to keep his job will try his best to make that company increase its revenues. Second, any company that cares about its customers will provide them with a range of material to satisfy their individual tastes.

I do agree with his point on the different covers on the *FORGOTTEN REALMS*<sup>TM</sup> boxed set. On the other hand, it may be a clever way to spark the interest of those unfamiliar with the fine art of role-playing... who knows?

I also have a problem with his opinion that *PLANESCAPE*<sup>TM</sup> should have been made a player's guide instead of a whole world. The *Manual of the Planes* was an informative handbook, but there wasn't enough information to base an entire campaign on. *PLANESCAPE* provides a solid base for a new campaign.

People I game with have noticed a change in the format of adventures, and we all welcome the change. In the original edition AD&D adventures, the modules virtually led players by the hand; one module led to another which led to the next and so on. In the AD&D 2nd Edition, adventures and boxed sets offer DMs a campaign hooks, starting point for any kind of campaign the players or DMs want.

TSR has been providing my group with quality products for over 10 years, and in no way will I abandon them for a product for which I may have no use.

Tim Cafferty  
Jersey City, NJ

I am writing in response to Koby Bryan's letter in issue #221.

I have to agree on the prices of the average TSR products. The *PLANESCAPE* boxed set was a little steep, and I have a problem with the prices for the handbooks (from \$15 to \$18, a 20% increase). Each handbook has about 127 pages while books from White Wolf with the same page count cost the same as the old price of the handbooks. As for the main books (the *PHB*, the *DMG*, and the *MONSTROUS MANUAL*<sup>TM</sup> tome, the combined total is \$68.90 (including Ohio's 6% tax rate). With dice, supplements, and campaign settings such as the *RAVENLOFT*<sup>®</sup> boxed set, it would be even more.

If we, as players, are trying to bring the AD&D game to new people, it would help if the prices were a bit lower. The prices don't bother me as much since I have a job; I think of the younger kids who don't have that kind of money.

As for lack of quality, I agree on some points but not on others. I am quite satisfied with the *PLANESCAPE* setting. *PLANESCAPE* is what I run and my group seems to like it quite a bit. I've played in a few *RAVENLOFT* adventures (but I don't think we've quite got the rules on how to be scared down yet).

We also play *DARK SUN*<sup>®</sup> a lot. It's one of my favorites and one of the most original concepts for the fantasy genre that I have been exposed to so far. They practically changed all the rules to accommodate the setting.

The bottom line is this: any setting and any RPG is only as good as the GM's ability to run an adventure. If you don't like something, then don't use it. Better yet, as long as everyone thinks it's fair, make up new things.

Chris Curran  
Toledo, OH

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## Standard floor rules

# Tournament Rules



One Judge, with as many Assistants as needed.

**Judge's job:** Interpret rules, choose winner when a round runs long (one round must begin and end within a given convention time slot; if a round runs long, decide winner based on terrain captured; if no terrain has been captured or more than one player has captured a terrain, the largest point total of "live" dice determines the winner), declare forfeiture, keep records. The Judge is the final arbiter. His word is law.

**Assistant's job:** Answer rules questions, traffic control, assign identifiers to each contestant, record results, anything else the Judge requires.

Judges and Assistants are barred from playing in the tournament.

Except as noted below, all standard rules (from the **DRAGON DICE™** Rule Book and any official TSR errata and clarifications) are used.

### Rules Clarifications

- The ID icon of each unit counts as a number of points equal to the unit's health: a common unit's ID icon counts as one point of effect; an uncommon unit's counts as two points of effect, a rare unit's ID icon counts as three points of effect, and a monster's ID icon counts as four points of effect. (Special 1: The

Sprite Swarm's ID icon counts as four points of effect and the die is rolled again, adding that effect as well. Special 2: The dragonmaster's TSR logo counts as four points of effect, just as its ID icon does.)

- The cost of each spell is increased by one point. For example, the *stoneskin* spell costs two points, the *lightning bolt* spell costs four points, and the *summon dragon* spell costs seven points.) Use the Tournament Reference Folder, as it has the correct spell costs listed on it.

- Magic from a player's reserve army can be cast only on that player's armies and units. Other player's dice cannot be targeted by that army's reserve magic.

- An army cannot cast magic that inflicts damage on another army belonging to the same player.

- If an army is both routed and destroyed, the attacker may still pursue.

- If a player has no units remaining in play, any spells he has in play are immediately negated.

- When an army's roll is to be both doubled and halved, all halving occurs before any doubling.

- Possession of a temple face prevents any new black spells from targeting the possessing army; it does not negate those already affecting that army.

- Possession of a temple face does not preclude a black dragon from being sent to that terrain.

- A dragon controlled by a dragonlord or dragonmaster can be summoned (per the spell) away from that control. In such a case, it can even be summoned to the terrain it currently occupies.

- During an attack by multiple dragons, if a dragonlord (or dragonmaster) takes control of a dragon, the owner of the dragonlord (or dragonmaster) chooses which dragon is controlled.

- During a dragon attack, if multiple dragonlords (and/or dragonmasters) roll ID icons or TSR logos, their owner decides which takes control of the dragon.

- If an army is attacked by multiple dragons, it may count its melee results against one and its missile results against another, possibly killing both with the same roll.

### Sealed Box Tournament Rules

Each field of battle consists of 16 players. These 16 players are divided into 2-player contests; these contests continue through four rounds of play, as defined below.

Each contestant brings one or two unopened, shrink-wrapped boxes to play. In some tournaments, contestants are required to bring their own unopened boxes to the table. In others, contestants will be required to purchase unopened boxes from an authorized dealer at the convention. This is determined by specific conventions and announced prior to the start of the convention.

Round One consists of three individual games. The winner of Round One is the contestant who wins two of the three games. The winner advances to Round Two. If a contestant loses a game during Round One, he may change to his second, still-unopened box (if he brought two boxes to play). If a contestant decides to change, he must use the second box through the duration of the tournament. Dice from one box cannot be mixed with dice from the other.

Rounds Two, Three, and Four consist of single elimination games, with the winners of each round advancing to the next.

In a one-field tournament (16 players), the winner of Round Four is the champion of the tournament. In the case of multiple fields of 16, Round Four winners meet in a Final Round. This Final Round ranges from a two-player (the winners of two fields of battle) to a four-player (the winners of four fields of battle) winner-take-all game. In the case of large conventions with more than four fields of battle, multiple champions will be declared after each Final Round. (For example, in a tournament consisting of five fields of battle, five champions of equal status will be declared after the Final Rounds are played.)

Boxes are resealed with a colored tape at the end of each round by the Judge or one of his Assistants. The tape color sequence is randomized at each tournament to inhibit cheating.

## BYO (Build Your Own) Tournament Rules

The tournament consists of one or more fields of battle. Each field of battle consists of 16 players. The 16 players meet in four-player or two-player contests as defined below and demonstrated on the BYO Tournament Sheets.

**Building an Army:** Each contestant brings a 24-point army to the tournament. Only half of those points can be spent on magic users. (Special: Each dragonlord and dragonmaster counts as two points of magic user and two points other, so an army composed entirely of one or both meets the requirement.) At the start of the tournament, each contestant is required to complete an Army Form. This form lists all the dice in that contestant's army. It is checked and signed by a Judge or Assistant, then signed by the contestant. At the start of each stage, a contestant's army may be checked against his Army Form. If dice have been exchanged or some other discrepancy appears, the contestant will be disqualified from the tournament.

Round One consists of four stages — a four-player game, followed by three two-player games among the same four opponents. Each field of battle uses one Round One tournament sheet. The 16 players are each assigned a designation (A through P) and divided into four-player blocks.

**Stage One:** Each four-player block competes in a four-player contest. The winner of each Stage One contest gains three Victory Points (VP).

**Stage Two:** Two-player contests between paired members of each block, as shown on the tournament sheet. The winner of each Stage Two contest gains two VP.

**Stage Three:** Two-player contests between paired members of each block, as shown on the tournament sheet. The winner of each Stage Three contest gains two VP.

**Stage Four:** Two-player contests between paired members of each block, as shown on the tournament sheet. The winner of each Stage Four contest gains two VP.

**Round One Winners:** One winner is declared for each block of players. The player with the most total VP in a specific block wins the round. Ties within a block are handled in the following manner: two-way ties are broken in favor of the contestant who won the two-player match versus the contestant who tied him; three-way ties (very rare) are broken by having all four contestants play

another four-player game for an additional three VP.

All Round One winners advance to Round Two.

Victory points accrue only from stage to stage within a round, never from one round to the next.

If the number of initial contestants is not divisible by four, some blocks may be run in threes, with a "ghost player" filling the D slot. The other players each receive a bye when matched against this "ghost" in Stages two to Four of Round One. Byes only occur in Round One of the tournament (though they may also occur in some instances in Round Three).

Round Two consists of the same four stages as Round One, only this time the contestants are the four winners from the same field of battle. All Round Two contestants start with zero VP. Contestants gain VP for winning each stage — three VP for Stage One, two VP for Stages Two to Four.

In a tournament that consists of a single field of battle, the champion of the tournament is the contestant with the most VP at the end of Round Two.

**Round Three:** In a tournament that consists of two to four fields of battle, Round Three must be played to declare a tournament champion. All Round Two winners advance to Round Three. The winner of Round Three is the tournament champion.

In a tournament with two fields of battle, the two contestants play a best of three series to decide the tournament champion.

In a tournament with three fields of battle, Round Three consists of four stages, as defined above, with a "ghost" player filling the D slot. The other players each receive a bye when matched against this "ghost" in Stages Two to Four of Round Three.

In a tournament with four fields of battle, Round Three is played just like Round Two.

In a tournament with more than four fields of battle, multiple champions will be declared.

# Official DRAGON DICE™ Sealed Box Tournament Sheet

## ROUND ONE

### Game One

A: \_\_\_\_\_  
B: \_\_\_\_\_

### Game Two

A: \_\_\_\_\_  
B: \_\_\_\_\_

### Game Three

A: \_\_\_\_\_  
B: \_\_\_\_\_

### Winner

AB: \_\_\_\_\_

### Game One

C: \_\_\_\_\_  
D: \_\_\_\_\_

### Game Two

C: \_\_\_\_\_  
D: \_\_\_\_\_

### Game Three

C: \_\_\_\_\_  
D: \_\_\_\_\_

### Winner

CD: \_\_\_\_\_

### Game One

E: \_\_\_\_\_  
F: \_\_\_\_\_

### Game Two

E: \_\_\_\_\_  
F: \_\_\_\_\_

### Game Three

E: \_\_\_\_\_  
F: \_\_\_\_\_

### Winner

EF: \_\_\_\_\_

### Game One

G: \_\_\_\_\_  
H: \_\_\_\_\_

### Game Two

G: \_\_\_\_\_  
H: \_\_\_\_\_

### Game Three

G: \_\_\_\_\_  
H: \_\_\_\_\_

### Winner

GH: \_\_\_\_\_

### Game One

I: \_\_\_\_\_  
J: \_\_\_\_\_

### Game Two

I: \_\_\_\_\_  
J: \_\_\_\_\_

### Game Three

I: \_\_\_\_\_  
J: \_\_\_\_\_

### Winner

IJ: \_\_\_\_\_

### Game One

K: \_\_\_\_\_  
L: \_\_\_\_\_

### Game Two

K: \_\_\_\_\_  
L: \_\_\_\_\_

### Game Three

K: \_\_\_\_\_  
L: \_\_\_\_\_

### Winner

KL: \_\_\_\_\_

### Game One

M: \_\_\_\_\_  
N: \_\_\_\_\_

### Game Two

M: \_\_\_\_\_  
N: \_\_\_\_\_

### Game Three

M: \_\_\_\_\_  
N: \_\_\_\_\_

### Winner

MN: \_\_\_\_\_

### Game One

O: \_\_\_\_\_  
P: \_\_\_\_\_

### Game Two

O: \_\_\_\_\_  
P: \_\_\_\_\_

### Game Three

O: \_\_\_\_\_  
P: \_\_\_\_\_

### Winner

OP: \_\_\_\_\_

## ROUND TWO (circle winners)

AB: \_\_\_\_\_  
CD: \_\_\_\_\_

EF: \_\_\_\_\_  
GH: \_\_\_\_\_

IJ: \_\_\_\_\_  
KL: \_\_\_\_\_

MN: \_\_\_\_\_  
OP: \_\_\_\_\_

## ROUND THREE (circle winners)

ABCD: \_\_\_\_\_  
IJKL: \_\_\_\_\_

EFGH: \_\_\_\_\_  
MNOP: \_\_\_\_\_

## Round Four

ABCDMNOP: \_\_\_\_\_  
EFGHIJKL: \_\_\_\_\_

## CHAMPION:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Judge's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Judge's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

# Official DRAGON DICE™ BYO Tournament Sheet (sheet one)

## ROUND ONE

### Stage One

A: \_\_\_\_\_  
B: \_\_\_\_\_  
C: \_\_\_\_\_  
D: \_\_\_\_\_

### Stage One

E: \_\_\_\_\_  
F: \_\_\_\_\_  
G: \_\_\_\_\_  
H: \_\_\_\_\_

### Stage One

I: \_\_\_\_\_  
J: \_\_\_\_\_  
K: \_\_\_\_\_  
L: \_\_\_\_\_

### Stage One

M: \_\_\_\_\_  
N: \_\_\_\_\_  
O: \_\_\_\_\_  
P: \_\_\_\_\_

### Stage Two

A: \_\_\_\_\_  
B: \_\_\_\_\_  
  
C: \_\_\_\_\_  
D: \_\_\_\_\_

### Stage Two

E: \_\_\_\_\_  
F: \_\_\_\_\_  
  
G: \_\_\_\_\_  
H: \_\_\_\_\_

### Stage Two

I: \_\_\_\_\_  
J: \_\_\_\_\_  
  
K: \_\_\_\_\_  
L: \_\_\_\_\_

### Stage Two

M: \_\_\_\_\_  
N: \_\_\_\_\_  
  
O: \_\_\_\_\_  
P: \_\_\_\_\_

### Stage Three

A: \_\_\_\_\_  
C: \_\_\_\_\_  
  
B: \_\_\_\_\_  
D: \_\_\_\_\_

### Stage Three

E: \_\_\_\_\_  
G: \_\_\_\_\_  
  
F: \_\_\_\_\_  
H: \_\_\_\_\_

### Stage Three

I: \_\_\_\_\_  
K: \_\_\_\_\_  
  
J: \_\_\_\_\_  
L: \_\_\_\_\_

### Stage Three

M: \_\_\_\_\_  
O: \_\_\_\_\_  
  
N: \_\_\_\_\_  
P: \_\_\_\_\_

### Stage Four

A: \_\_\_\_\_  
D: \_\_\_\_\_  
  
B: \_\_\_\_\_  
C: \_\_\_\_\_

### Stage Four

E: \_\_\_\_\_  
H: \_\_\_\_\_  
  
F: \_\_\_\_\_  
G: \_\_\_\_\_

### Stage Four

I: \_\_\_\_\_  
L: \_\_\_\_\_  
  
J: \_\_\_\_\_  
K: \_\_\_\_\_

### Stage Four

M: \_\_\_\_\_  
P: \_\_\_\_\_  
  
N: \_\_\_\_\_  
O: \_\_\_\_\_

## WINNERS (advance to round two)

ABCD: \_\_\_\_\_

EFGH: \_\_\_\_\_

IJKL: \_\_\_\_\_

MNOP: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Judge's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Judge's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

# Official DRAGON DICE™ BYO Tournament Sheet (sheet two)

## ROUND TWO

### Stage One

ABCD: \_\_\_\_\_

EFGH: \_\_\_\_\_

IJKL: \_\_\_\_\_

MNOP: \_\_\_\_\_

### Stage Two

ABCD: \_\_\_\_\_

EFGH: \_\_\_\_\_

IJKL: \_\_\_\_\_

MNOP: \_\_\_\_\_

### Stage Three

ABCD: \_\_\_\_\_

IJKL: \_\_\_\_\_

EFGH: \_\_\_\_\_

MNOP: \_\_\_\_\_

### Stage Four

ABCD: \_\_\_\_\_

MNOP: \_\_\_\_\_

EFGH: \_\_\_\_\_

IJKL: \_\_\_\_\_

## ROUND THREE (if necessary)

### Stage One

Winner R2A: \_\_\_\_\_

Winner R2B: \_\_\_\_\_

Winner R2 C: \_\_\_\_\_

Winner R2 D: \_\_\_\_\_

### Stage Two

R2 A: \_\_\_\_\_

R2 B: \_\_\_\_\_

R2 C: \_\_\_\_\_

R2 D: \_\_\_\_\_

### Stage Three

R2 A: \_\_\_\_\_

R2 C: \_\_\_\_\_

R2 B: \_\_\_\_\_

R2 D: \_\_\_\_\_

### Stage Four

R2 A: \_\_\_\_\_

R2 D: \_\_\_\_\_

R2 B: \_\_\_\_\_

R2 C: \_\_\_\_\_

**Winner: (advance to Round Three if necessary)**

ABCDEFGHI JKLMNOP: \_\_\_\_\_

**CHAMPION:**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Judge's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Judge's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_



# Sage Advice

by Skip Williams

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If you have any questions on the games produced by TSR, Inc., "Sage Advice" will answer them. In the United States and Canada, write to: Sage Advice, *DRAGON® Magazine*, 201 Sheridan Springs Rd., Lake Geneva, WI, 53147, USA. In Europe, write to: Sage Advice, *DRAGON® Magazine*, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge, CB1 3LB, United Kingdom. We are no longer able to make personal replies. Please send no SASEs with your questions. SASEs are being returned with writer's guidelines.

This month, the Sage considers the powers and limitations of a few spells from the AD&D® 2nd Edition game.

**Is it possible for a large object, such as a *Daern's instant fortress*, to penetrate a prismatic sphere and crush the people inside? Would the object have to make a saving throw against each layer? How would saving throws and damage from each layer affect the object?**

Objects cannot penetrate intact *prismatic spheres* at all unless carried by a creature that makes all the required saving throws. If a *Daern's instant fortress* were activated so as to crush creatures protected by a *prismatic sphere*, the sphere's 7th (violet) layer would completely protect the creatures and the fortress would be destroyed. Any unattended object that enters a *prismatic sphere* is destroyed unless it is an artifact or relic.

If an object, or group of objects, is sufficiently large, it might bury a *prismatic sphere* instead of being utterly destroyed. For example, a party caught in an avalanche cannot hastily create a *prismatic sphere* and then just blithely walk away when the dust settles, nor can a party inadvertently (or deliberately) drain the ocean if they erect a *prismatic sphere* underwater.

Note that it is not possible to use a *prismatic sphere* offensively; if created so that the sphere overlapped a wall of a

*Daern's instant fortress* or other construction, the sphere would harmlessly pass through the wall, leaving the structure undamaged.

***Chain lightning* is a 6th-level spell, so wizards have to be at least 12th level to cast it. The spell description says *chain lightning* inflicts 1d6 points of damage per level, to a maximum of 12d6, so what's the point of giving damage dice per level?**

Here's the point: A spell's effective "casting level" can vary. Magical items that produce spell-like effects are the most common examples. Wands, for instance, can be enchanted to duplicate spells of any level, but any spell-like effects they produce function at 6th-level for purposes of range, damage, duration, and any other spell variable that depends on the caster's level. A *wand of chain lightning* could only produce a bolt of lightning with a maximum damage rating of 6d6 and a maximum range of 70 yards. It makes no difference that chain lightning requires a 12th-level caster; the best the wand can do is 6d6 points of damage. Any number of other conditions also can change a spell's casting level; planar effects and wild magic head the list.

**The player characters in my campaign once found a big gold statue that was much too heavy for them to carry away. Rather than hacking the thing to bits and hauling away the pieces, the party cleric cast a *frisky chest* spell on the statue. The rest of the party lined up at strategic positions along the route back to the entrance and herded the statue all the way outside, where they had a chariot waiting. Is this feat really possible, I did I give my players an undeserved gift?**

A *frisky chest* spell can affect any object small enough to fit inside a 10' cube. If the statue wasn't too big, you and your players did things according to the rules.

Now, *frisky chest* is a spell designed to help priests protect their stuff, it's not for extracting treasure from dungeons. So, your players were abusing the spell and you might indeed have given them an undeserved gift. Because *frisky chest* is suppose to foil thieves, the statue's movements should have been contrary to what the players wanted at every possible opportunity. Now consider how much noise a walking statue might make. Were there any denizens of the dungeon within earshot? A surprise attack by a group of monsters might have really wrecked the party's day, especially if they were separated and concentrating on the statue when the attack came. Also think about how much the statue weighed. Could the chariot hold all that weight when the party finally herded the statue aboard? Could the dungeon floor hold the statue as the it ambled along? Note that the spell allows the animated object to sprout whatever appendages are most appropriate. Did the statue sprout wings and fly away when the PCs finally got it outside? Note also that any restraint placed on the object breaks a *frisky chest* spell. So, the party might have caught the statue as it flew away, but the minute they got hold of it they would have been holding dead weight. That might be inconvenient if anyone was standing under it at the time.

Keep all of the foregoing in mind if your players try the same trick again. You also might want to put a weight limit on the *frisky chest* spell to discourage really egregious abuse. I suggest 100 pounds per caster level.

**Do the images created by a *mirror image* spell make sound? If not, one could avoid the spell's effect entirely by simply closing one's eyes and taking the -4 attack penalty for being unable to see the target. The penalty would be even less if you had the blindfighting skill.**

The spell description says *mirror image* creates exact duplicates of the caster. Considering the spell's short duration and purely defensive nature, I don't think it's unreasonable to assume that the images include sound and smell as well as sight. On the other hand, *mirror image* is only a 2nd-level spell, and "Sage Advice" has previously suggested that invisibility foils displacement. I suggest you go ahead and allow characters to ignore *mirror images* if they can't see them. Remember, however, that fighting blind is just like fighting in total darkness, which carries more than just an attack penalty (see Table 72 in the *DMG*). The blindfighting proficiency reduces or eliminates some of these penalties, but not all them.

**At what point do player characters under the effects of *enlarge* spells start getting bigger knockdown dice? Large creatures also extend weapon reach. At what point do enlarged characters get extra reach?**

To get an *enlarged* character's size class, just note the character's new height and use the size categories from the

MONTRIOUS MANUAL™ tome. The sizes are: tiny (up to 2' tall); small (2'+ to 4'); man-sized (4'+ to 7'); large (7'+ to 12'); +1 melee reach and knockdown; huge (12'+ to 25'); +2 melee reach and knockdown; and gargantuan (25'+), +3 melee reach and knockdown. Remember to increase the enlarged character's base initiative as his size class increases.

**How much should characters know about magical items when they find them? *Detect magic* spells can reveal that an item is enchanted, but what about specific powers?**

Generally, characters should know very little about the magical items they find. Divination spells such as *identify*, *commune*, *contact other plane*, and *legend lore* can reveal or at least hint at specific powers. Otherwise, characters just have to experiment with newly acquired items and try to puzzle them out. Even a small sip of a potion for example, produces a minor effect that hints at the potion's enchantment. A sip of a growth potion, for instance, might make a character's clothing or armor feel tight. Items that produce continual effects are fairly easy

to test. A character who has just donned a *ring of water walking*, for example, will have a pretty good idea what he has after a trip to the local pond or fountain.

Items with specific triggers or command words are trickier. Usually, the owner will have to visit the local sage, bard, or high-level spellcaster to get some clue about how to start experimenting with the item. Some DMs devise intricate puzzles their players must solve before their characters can use their items. It all depends on how rare and wonderful the DM wants to make magic. If players have to work hard for their magic they tend to appreciate it more.

Note that intelligent items such as swords might be able to tell their owners what their powers are (though they don't always do so). Also, nothing beats instructions from the previous owner when trying to figure out a magical item's properties. Taking a few prisoners and negotiating with them carefully can be well worth the effort.

***The Complete Paladin's Handbook* has lots of good information about what holy swords can do, but can you explain**

By Rex F. May



"This guy has a lot of political supporters, so I want you to make it look like an accident."

the meaning of the swords ability to dispel hostile magic? When is magic "hostile" and when is it not?

In this case, magic is hostile when it is potentially harmful to the paladin or his allies and directed either at the paladin or placed so that this its area of effect overlaps the circle of power the holy sword generates.

**What happens to a paladin when he encounters a creature that cannot enter the circle of protection surrounding the paladin, but really wants to hurt the paladin? If the creature pushes hard against the circle, can it make the paladin move? What happens when the paladin gets forced into an obstacle?**

You're confusing the aura of protection that surrounds a paladin with a *protection from evil* spell. In the AD&D 2nd Edition game, the two are similar, but not the same. A paladin's aura of protection doesn't hedge out anything. Evil, conjured, or enchanted creatures within 10' of the paladin suffer a -1 attack penalty, but the aura doesn't keep them out. The aura, like a *protection from evil* spell, also prevents any form magical control from being exerted across the barrier.

Note that it is not possible to exert force across the barrier formed by *protection from evil* or a *protection from evil* 10' radius spell. Neither version of the spell creates a giant hamster ball like an Ottiluke's resilient sphere does. If a creature that normally would be hedged out by the spell, nothing happens if it pushes against the barrier. The creature cannot cross the barrier, but it also cannot make the character at the center of the spell move, not even by a micron. On the other hand, if a character protected by the spell forces the barrier against a creature that normally would be hedged out, the barrier collapses, ending the spell.

**The Complete Thief's Handbook allows thieves to wear armor heavier than leather and still use their thieving skills at a penalty. What are the effects of armor on the new thief skills given in the Skills & Powers book?**

Okay, here are my suggestions:

Skill	No Armor	Elven Chain	Padded, Hide, or Studded Leather	Chain Mail or Ring Mail
Bribe		—	—	—
Detect Illusion	—	-5%	-10%	-10%
Detect Magic	—	-5%	-10%	-10%
Escape Bonds	—	-5%	-10%	-10%
Tunneling	+5%	-20%	-30%	-25%

How do you assign knockdown dice to large creatures using weapons? Page 32 of the *PLAYER'S OPTION™: Combat & Tactics* book says large monsters bump the weapon's knockdown die up to the next size. Does this mean that a centaur with a two-handed sword rolls 1d20 for knockdowns? If the centaur also is a grand master with a two-handed sword does he roll 1d100 for knockdowns?

A knockdown die of 1d12 increases to 1d20. I don't recommend allowing any knockdown die to increase beyond 1d20. (As it is, rolling 1d20 will give a knockdown chance about half the time against huge opponents and even more often against smaller opponents.) I also don't recommend increasing any knockdown die more than three places. For example, a creature armed with a dagger never gets a knockdown die bigger than 1d10, no matter how big or skilled it is.

If you don't like the foregoing advice, the steps beyond 1d20 are: 1d30, 1d40, 1d50, and so on. The best way to generate these numbers is with 1d10 and some kind of a control die. For example, you can roll 1d30 by rolling a 10-sided die and a six-sided die. If the six-sided die comes up a 1 or 2, read the 10-sided die as it is. If the six-sided die rolls a 3 or 4, add 10 to the number on the 10-sided die, and if the six-sided die comes up a 5 or 6 add 20 to the number on the 10-sided die.

*Skip Williams is a game designer and editor at TSR. If you have any questions on TSR gaming products for the Sage, you can write to him at 201 Sheridan Springs Road, Lake Geneva, WI 53147, or you can e-mail him at [TSRsage@aol.com](mailto:TSRsage@aol.com). We regret that personal replies are not possible.*

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One of the most annoying problems in any AD&D® game is when, for whatever reason, the characters in an adventuring party decide to split up.

It is bothersome because you now have two or more groups to keep track of and monitor. Back and forth you go between the varied groups, trying to give each an appropriate amount of attention. How good are you at juggling?

It also creates role-playing difficulties. With everyone sitting around the table, it is difficult for a player with a character in Group A to ignore key information that Group B picks up while shopping at the local Aurora's Whole Realms outlet store. What is really awkward is when Group B gets waylaid on the way back by a group of thieves, and they are all captured and held for ransom; since the members of Group A have just observed Group B being trashed, no matter how good they are at role-playing, it is going to be difficult for them to ignore the red-headed thief who led the ambush against their comrades.

It can also be a royal pain for the players when the group splits up. One might have to endure long stretches of boredom while someone else's merchant-rogue PC (from the **AL-QADIM**® game world) goes to the bazaar to negotiate the price of a string of camels. As the haggling goes on, other players go grab a snack or take a bathroom break. They begin by rolling dice mindlessly. Then they talk about yesterday's ball game. This disturbs the hagglers, who ask the other players to shush, and the DM states, "Hang on. I'll be with you in just a minute." The unoccupied players sigh and try to be patient, but it is clear that they are bored.

Splitting up an adventuring party is generally a poor strategy, as well as an annoyance to everyone. In an Underdark adventure or one that is heavy on combat, it is often tantamount to suicide.

## What To Do When Your Party Wants To Split Up

by Paul Culotta

illustrated by Phil Longmeier

### Your Options

Despite advice against such suicidal moves, players will split up anyway. In fairness to the individual player, he has the right to do so. You just have to figure out how to do it.

One way is to alternate back and forth among the various groups. For reasons stated above, this does not always work well.

Another method, particularly useful when key information can be found, is to take Group A characters into another room outside the hearing of Groups B and C. This can be effective if the separation is very short, say just a few minutes. If it gets longer, the only advantage gained is that players in Groups B and C will not have their conversation about the football game competing with the camel haggling.

### The "Include Everybody" Option

The best method is to include the other players (the players themselves, not their characters) in Group A's situation. What you have to do is quickly scribble down some statistics and notes

on the camel merchant Yusif and his trusty assistant, the saluk Mustafa. Hand these to two players who are not in Group A. You may even take them aside and give them a few guidelines, such as: *"Todd, you play the part of Yusif, the camel merchant. You have five desert camels, two breeding camels, and one war camel for sale. I've written on the paper the lowest price you will take for them. One of the desert camels is blind in one eye, but you don't want to let the buyer know that. Ross, you play Mustafa, the guy who keeps the lot clean and helps Yusif. You stay in the background, helping show off the camels with lots of smiles. At an appropriate moment, you can try to get close to the buyer and pick his pocket. Pull on your left earlobe when you want to give this a try."*

Suddenly two players, who were about to engage in the mindless dice-rolling that signals boredom, are involved to the hilt and having lots of fun. Yusif greets the merchant-rogue with an oily smile, and Mustafa nods eagerly as his boss makes his sales pitch. He quickly goes to fetch a chair for the buyer to sit in as the camels are brought to him (Ross thinks of this on his own), and as he sets it down behind him, he tries to pick the man's pocket. The haggling becomes spirited. If the saluk succeeds, imagine the character's surprise when he reaches in his pouch to pay for the hard-bargained camels and he does not have enough money for the purchase.

If the thief fails and is caught at it, he flees. The merchant-rogue from the adventuring party takes off after him, yelling for help. Two mamluks appear (two more sheets of quick notes on the mamluks go to other unoccupied players) to help him with the chase.

This continues until the situation is resolved. Once it is over, you move "on" to Group B, who is entering the Singing Maiden coffee-house. This time you hand out to the non-Group B players quick notes on a few customers. Things progress as usual.

This works very well because it keeps

everyone involved in the game. No one should be bored. Indeed, when the players take on the role of NPCs who are not at all like their characters, they will be stretching (and improving) their role-playing skills. In most cases, I have seen that they relish the experience and decide that they like playing a saluk, mamluk, or whatever. They may even want to bring a new character into the next role-playing session.

## The Option and Combat: A DARK SUN® Case Study

Involving the players does not have to be restricted just to role-playing situations. It can extend to combat as well, and in this case the unoccupied players can assume the parts of the "bad guys."

The first time I ever saw this method used was in a DARK SUN® campaign. The characters were part of a caravan that had stopped in a city. Four of us were recovering spells and recuperating from a heavy combat in the desert the day before. Two of the player characters, Rathas the mul gladiator and Kholai the elven thief, decided to go check out the local bazaar.

Kholai spotted a steel dagger among

the wares of a weapons seller in the bazaar. This was only the second time in the whole campaign that any of us had seen a steel weapon, and she salivated at the thought of owning it. The fact that its price was far beyond her means did not dissuade her. She convinced Rathas to engage the merchant in conversation while she would try to slip to the rear of the stall, cut open a hole in the hide that covered the rear, and purloin the rare dagger. (For those who do not play DARK SUN, steel is very expensive and very rare on Athas; most weapons are made of bone, wood, or something else).

Everything worked fine until the *alarm* spell at the back of the stall went off, and then all hell broke loose. The merchant went rushing back to see whose hand was sticking through the torn backing of the stand. Rathas tried to stop him, and the merchant screamed for help. Kholai tried to get away from the area, but he was noticed. Four of the city guards showed up and demanded surrender. Rathas and Kholai refused.


At that point, our DM started arranging the battlefield, and then handed each of us non-participants a sheet with just a few notes on one of the guards. He

asked us to run these NPCs, and we (who were dismayed at Kholai even thinking about another theft) were all too glad to cooperate. We ran through declarations, initiative, and combat as normal, except that now the DM did not have to make combat decisions or roll dice for the NPCs; we did. Rathas chuckled at the thought of only four guards trying to take him, a renowned gladiator of Tyr, but his laughter stopped when my NPC, who was a fighter/psionicist, caused his loin-cloth to burst into flames. All of the dice-rolling was on the table, and, believe me, we were definitely involved. Rathas and Kholai were beaten into unconsciousness and dragged off for justice. The DM let us continue to role-play the guards as the local tyrant (played by the DM) dispensed justice. In the end, they were sentenced to be sold into slavery, and while Rathas managed to escape later, Kholai was lost as a character.

Was everyone involved? Yes. Was there boredom? No. As we left to go home, several of us remarked that it was one of the best times we had had in a long time. Even the player who had lost his chaotic thief character admitted he had had a great time.

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# ORCS NEST

MESSY  
CHRISTMAS

NAPPY  
NEW  
YEAR

CHRISTMAS IS COMING, THE ORC IS GETTING FAT,  
HE THINKS HE'S FATHER CHRISTMAS IN HIS  
STOOPID LOOKING HAT!

OH YES!

GIVING IT LARGE

ALL MANNER OF OLD TRIPE FOR RPGS AND CARDS AND  
STUFF FROM BOTH SHOPS... AND THE ONE IN  
SLOUGH SELLS COMICS AND KITS TOO...

## “Include Everybody” Limits

Although this method works, it has its limits. First, you should only consider using it whenever the other characters (Groups B and C) have absolutely no chance of showing up to influence the action. In my DARK SUN example, the other four of us were in a caravan camp a good mile away from the action and we had stated we were resting. Thus we could not have participated in the action with Rathas and Kholai (Group A).

Whenever you assign NPCs to a player, they should only be minor or “bit part” NPCs. Major NPCs who are chief villains, allies, or significant sources of information are usually very well developed and it would take too long for a player to assimilate the information to role-play such an NPC well. Moreover, you should maintain control of the game so that it is enjoyable and challenging for all the players; one group or several.

While we played the parts of the four guards in the **DARK SUN** example, the DM played the city ruler. This major NPC controlled the decision on what was to be done with Rathas and Kholai (something that should not be in the hands of other

players), and also had key information for use in the campaign later (which we in Group B did not discover until we went to talk with him later).

Using this option should not occur in any climactic or final scene or the lair of the chief villain. Even with minor NPCs, players would learn too much about the chief villain or his lair, and they would be cheated of the joy of discovering these tidbits on their own.

Whenever players are role-playing bits and pieces, have all dice rolls occur in open view. This keeps everybody honest. If someone's character dies or is captured, there can be no recrimination ("Hey, don't blame me, it was the dice!"). The dice never lie. (Perhaps they will not be so anxious to split the party next time?)

Even though all dice are on the table, you must ensure that the players understand that you have final approval on NPC decisions. Generally you will not have to interfere. If, however, the situation calls for the NPC orcs, mamluks, or whatever to make a morale check, you need to enforce it otherwise over-enthusiastic players might skew the game (Player: "My orc is butch! He wouldn't flee!" DM: "All his companions are dead.

You need to roll a morale check.”).

You should only do this when the involved characters (Group A) have a fair chance of succeeding in whatever they are trying. Pitting two characters against a platoon of trolls is patently unfair, but putting a 6th-level mul gladiator and a 5th-level elven thief against four guards (three 4th-level fighters and one a multi-classed fighter 3/psioniciest 3) is tough, but fair. In the example above, the mul and thief could have trashed the guards if the dice had gone the other way.

Sometimes there is no harm in bouncing back and forth between Groups A and B, but giving minor NPCs to unoccupied players to role-play can be the answer avoiding a boring halt arising from splitting the party. In fact, it can add a lot of color to the campaign and be a great deal of fun since players assume fresh roles. And having fun is what it is all about.



*Paul A. Culotta lives in Tacoma, Washington, and is a full-time national guardsman. He is a frequent contributor to DRAGON® Magazine and DUNGEON® Adventures.*

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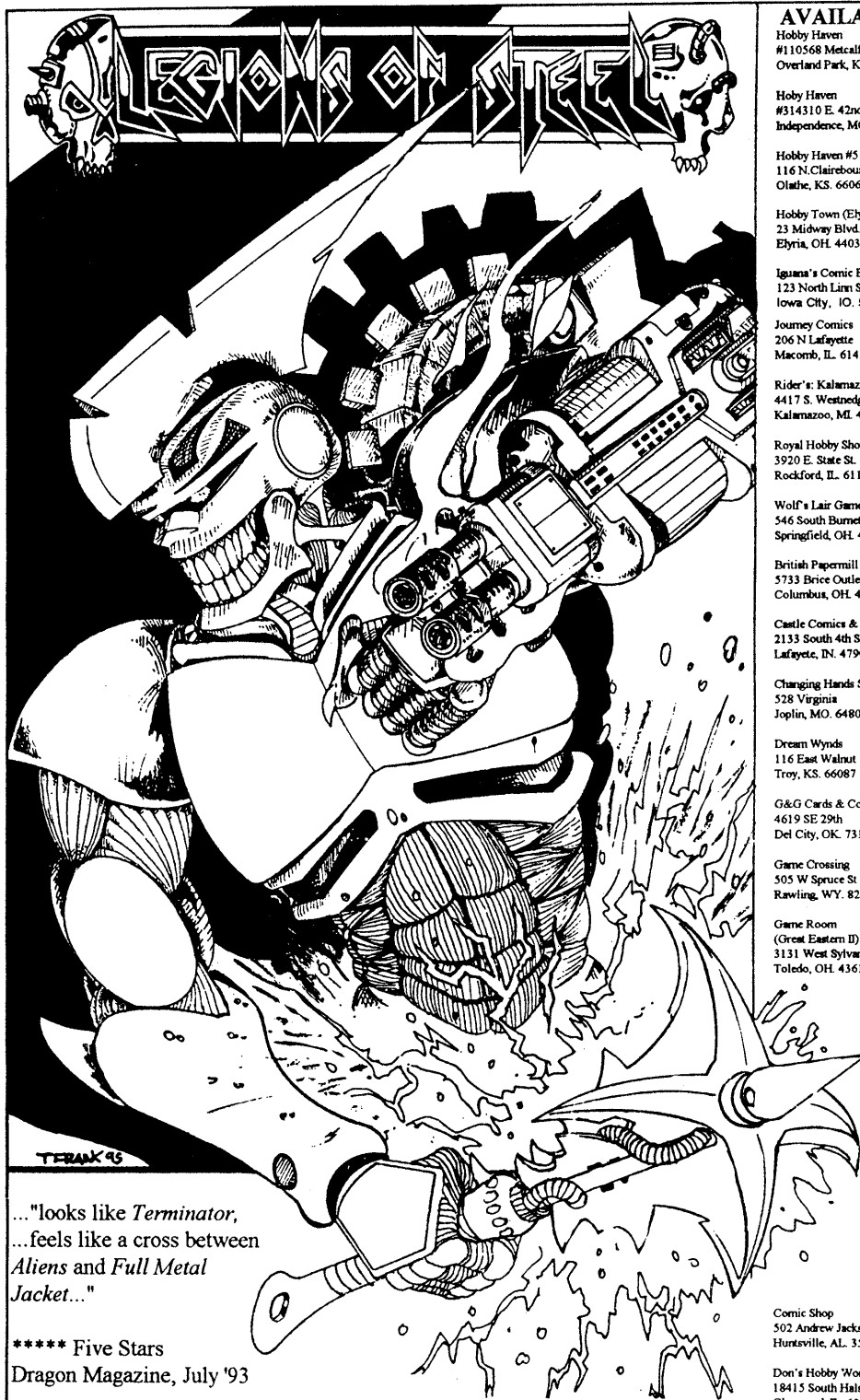
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Dragon Magazine, July '93

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# Role-Playing

## Reviews

Quick and easy  
games you can  
learn in five  
minutes

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I know, I know. You're dying to tackle that new 500-page role-playing game and its three-volume expansion set, but there aren't enough hours in the day. You've got school or work. You've got family obligations. You've got that side job you need to finance your collection of collectible card game cards.

Well, relax. This month, we come to the rescue with three new games you can learn in the time it takes to read this column (that is, if you read it slowly). So what're you waiting for? The clocks a-ticking...

### Warhammer Quest\* game

One four-page introductory booklet, one 32-page rule book, 10 plastic dungeon doorways, one 192-page role-playing book, one 16-page adventure book, 56 plastic bases, 91 plastic miniatures, 108 playing







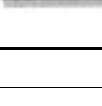
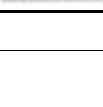

cards, 32 game board sections, 58 counters and tokens, four character cards, 50-sheet adventure record pad, 18 six-sided dice; boxed.

Games Workshop \$60

Design: Andy Jones

Additional material: Gavin Thorpe, Ian Pickstock, and Mark Hawkins

### Role-playing games' rating

	Not recommended	
	May be useful	
	Fair	
	Good	
	Excellent	
	The BEST!	

Illustrations: Richard Wright, Dave Gallagher, John Blanche, Wayne England, and Mark Gibbons  
Cover: Geoff Taylor

The lamest game I ever played? Easy – TSR, Inc's **ALL MY CHILDREN**™ game, derived from the television soap opera. Second place? It's a 20-way tie. The **Broadsides & Boarding Parties**\* game (a dopey pirate simulation from Milton Bradley) makes the list, as does the **Powers & Perils**\* game (incomprehensible fantasy role-playing from the Avalon Hill Game Company). Also on the list is TSR, Inc's **DUNGEON**™ board game, a stripped-down version of the original **DUNGEONS & DRAGONS**® game where the characters enter rooms, destroy monsters, snatch treasures, and repeat *ad infinitum* until they run out of monsters or the players doze off.

But unlike **Broadsides** and **Powers**, **DUNGEON** has an undeniable appeal – not for sophisticated guys like me, mind you, but for seemingly every other person on the planet Earth. I've had **DUNGEON** for 10 years, and it's gotten so much of a workout that I'm on my third copy. I've lost count of the number of visitors to the Swan house – everyone from my adolescent relatives to the next-door neighbors – who've spent hours engrossed in **DUNGEON**'s featherweight fantasy, while I stood by, mouth agape, trying in vain to get them to take a crack at the **Call of Cthulhu**\* game.

Well, if they like **DUNGEON**, they're gonna love **Warhammer Quest**, which is sort of like **DUNGEON** on steroids. Even I, Mr. Sophisticated, couldn't resist the lavish components. I spent half an hour fondling the dozens of plastic miniatures, so detailed that you can count the wrinkles on the minotaur's belly. I oohed and ahhed over the full-color card decks, the stacks of counters and tokens, the picturesque game board (is that blood oozing from a wall in the spike room?). I only meant to thumb through the rule books, but I wound up reading every word, drawn by the easy-on-the-brain explana-



tions ("To find out whether he successfully hits the Goblin with his sword, the Barbarian has to roll a die. He rolls a 5, and hits his target!"). With trembling hands, I set up the game board, positioned my characters, and began drawing cards. The night evaporated. So did the next one. Even though the concepts are dust-bowl ancient, even though the execution's kinda dumb, heaven help me — I'm becoming obsessed.

To get an obsession of your own underway, you'll need to round up four players (the game works with two or even one, but four is best). Each player controls a character — Barbarian, Wizard, Elf, or Dwarf — represented by a plastic figure and a Warrior Card listing the character's attributes and skills. One player draws an Objective Card, which indicates a location in the soon-to-be-generated dungeon, such as the Idol Chamber or the Fire Chasm. Another player rolls a six-sided die and then refers to the Adventure Book to find the goal for that particular session; for instance, a five result for the Idol Chamber Objective indicates the "Return the Staff" adventure, requiring the characters, working as a team, to replace a staff in the hand of an idol in the Cursed Pit.

To generate the dungeon, one player draws a Dungeon Card that reveals the chamber looming ahead, such as the Guard Room or the Well of Doom. The players locate the board section that corresponds to the Dungeon Card, then clip it to a plastic doorway. After passing through the doorway, the characters confront whatever lurks inside, determined by the draw of an Event Card. Most Event Cards unleash hordes of monsters, like giant bats, goblin archers, and snotlings. The characters attack the monsters by maneuvering into position, rolling dice, and comparing their offensive ratings to the monsters' defensive ratings. Then the monsters retaliate. If the characters defeat the monsters, which they usually do, they collect whatever treasure is lying around, then move to the next room and another set of Dungeon and Event Cards. Along the way, they acquire various spells (*fireball*, *iron skin*) and items (Dragon Shield, Healing Salve). Upon reaching the Objective Room, they fight another battle or two, and, if victorious, complete the mission and win the game.

Yep, what we have here is a string of random events, most of them combat encounters, with an occasional death trap thrown in to break the monotony. What prevents Warhammer Quest from

degenerating into a mind-numbing die-rolling contest — indeed, what elevates it into the stratosphere — is the sheer number and variety of events. When you exhaust the Event Cards, you're directed to the Roleplay Book which contains nearly 200 pages of encounters, obstacles, and rewards for every phase of the party's existence. There are events that occur before they enter the dungeon (bandit ambush, tornado). There are events that occur inside the dungeon (rain of snakes, ghost guide). There are events that occur after they leave the dungeon (investment opportunity, duelist challenge). And when the characters get tired of events, they can experiment with a cornucopia of new monsters, treasures, skills, and spells.

As for realism — are you kidding? Warhammer Quest is about as realistic as Michael Jackson's nose. We have monsters that appear out of nowhere. We have lanterns that never run out of oil. We have architecture that defies the laws of physics. I could go on, but why bother? Warhammer Quest doesn't pretend to be realistic, and therefore doesn't deserve to be criticized for its lack of logic. That's like criticizing a candy bar for its lack of vitamins.

**Evaluation:** So why spend 60 bucks on a Warhammer Quest? Three reasons:

Because one Christmas isn't enough. Forget the game; considered only as a box of toys, this is a tremendous value. Because you want to get rich. At last year's GEN CON® game fair auction, I noticed BroadSides & Boarding Parties selling for close to \$200. And the buyers weren't parting with big bucks because they wanted to play the game; they lusted after those little plastic pirates. I don't know how Games Workshop can afford to publish products as lavish as Warhammer Quest, but I bet they won't be doing it forever. An investor could do worse than buying a few copies and stashing them under his bed. Considering the inflated prices demanded by turkeys like Broadside, Warhammer resales might be able to finance a comfortable retirement.

Because you need some new role-players. Unlike the hopelessly abstract DUNGEON, Warhammer Quest does a admirable job of incorporating role-playing fundamentals, and thus serves as a painless introduction to RPGs. And when Quest-ers get the hang of hit points and attribute scores, that's where you step in with Call of Cthulhu or the AD&D® game. Of course, once your neighbors get a taste of the real thing, you may never get

them out of the house.

## Fudge\*

104-page softcover book  
Grey GhostGames \$12  
(set of four six-sided FUDGE dice,  
\$2.25)

Design: Steffan O'Sullivan

Editing: Ann Dupuis

Cover: Jeff Koke



FUDGE — an acronym for Freeform Universal Do-It-Yourself Gaming Engine — bills itself as a role-playing game, but that's not strictly true. It is, in fact, a set of guidelines for creating your own rules for your own game, sort of a Freeform Universal Role-playing Design Kit. But FURDK doesn't exactly roll off the tongue, hence: FUDGE.

Name aside, it's a remarkable achievement, a concise, logical analysis of RPG theory that amateur and pro designers alike would do well to ponder. Dissecting a mountain of game systems led FUDGE designer Steffan O'Sullivan to two conclusions: (1) skills should be considered separately from attributes (my ability to drive a car isn't necessarily related to my Intelligence or Dexterity), and (2) when resolving the use of a skill, it's usually better to focus on the general outcome rather than the mathematical probability (I have a reasonable chance of driving safely from Des Moines to Chicago, not an 82% chance). These conclusions form the basis of FUDGE.

O'Sullivan begins by jettisoning numerical ratings for attributes and skills, and substituting a seven-level sequence of ordinary words (an idea pioneered by TSR, Inc.'s MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ game in 1984). An attribute rated Superb indicates superhuman ability; Terrible indicates utter incompetence. In between are Great, Good, Fair, Mediocre, and Poor. The referee relies on subjective appraisals and common sense to determine the ratings. When considering Intelligence, for example, Albert Einstein might rate Superb, Beavis and Butt-Head Terrible, and a guy like me Great (okay, Good... uh, Fair). Skills are rated independently of attributes, based on the player's conception of the character and the referee's opinion; Albert Einstein might have a Poor Poetry skill, while I might rate Fair (okay, Mediocre).

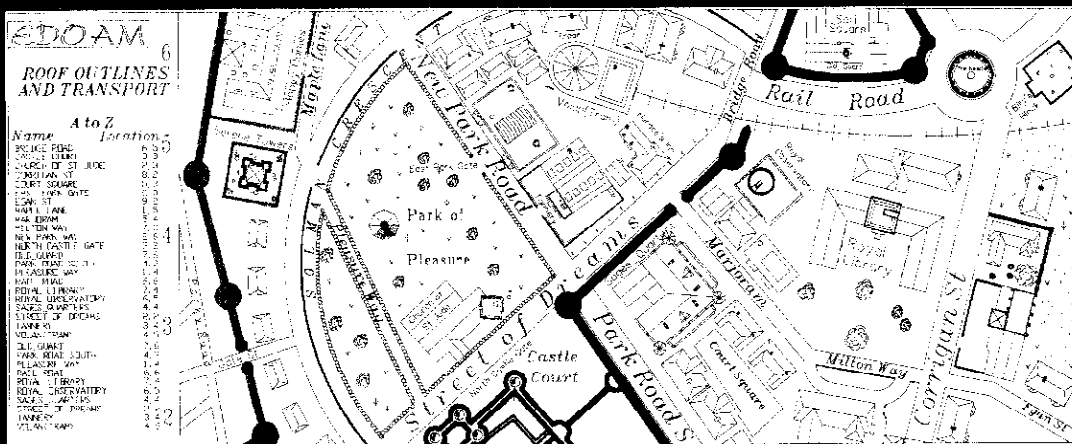
As for the number of attributes, that's also up to the referee. If he prefers to work with only a few attributes, he might decide to limit the characters to just

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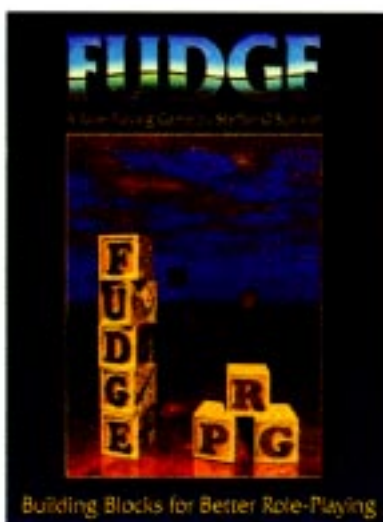
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Strength and Intelligence (or Stamina and Knowledge — the terminology is also up to him). Alternately, he can incorporate a menu of attributes as long as his arm. The same goes for skills: he might include just a handful of basics, or allow the players to choose from a book-length list.

The referee can assign any rating to any attribute. Or, he might decide that a certain number of attributes will be rated Superb, a certain number Good, and so on. Or, he might award each player a number of “free levels” equal to half the number of the character’s attributes. All attributes begin at Fair, unless the player raises or lowers them by expending free levels; it costs two free levels to improve an attribute from Fair to Great, while lowering an attribute from Fair to Mediocre earns an extra level that can be spent elsewhere. A similar system is used to raise and lower skill ratings.

To resolve an action, the referee sets a Difficulty Level, then decides which skill or attribute applies. For instance, he might decide that scaling a wall has a Difficulty Rating of Good (it’s a high wall) and Climbing is the relevant skill. The player then rolls against his character’s



Climbing rating; let’s say it’s Fair. (If the character didn’t have a Climbing skill, he uses a default level of Poor, or the referee assigns a level based on the character’s general aptitude for physical feats.) He rolls four FUDGE dice, which are six-siders with two blank faces, two +1 faces, and two -1 faces. The FUDGE dice total indicates a modifier; a roll of two blanks, three +1s, and two -1s equals +1. To climb the wall, his modified Climbing rating must equal or exceed the Difficulty

Level; a +1 boosts Fair to Good, meaning that the character has successfully scaled the wall. Combat consists of a series of FUDGE rolls, with a few offensive and defensive modifiers.

O’Sullivan fine-tunes the system with a host of interesting extras. Spells and super powers fall into the category of Gifts, souped-up skills with special penalties and qualifiers. At the outset of a game, players receive 1-5 Fudge Points which they can spend to change unfavorable rolls, nullify attack results, and achieve automatic +4 modifiers. If a player insists on an unreasonably powerful character, O’Sullivan suggests that the referee activate the “Disturbance in the Force” rule, where the mightiest PCs attract the most serious problems. (“Too bad you lost your sword in that earthquake, Samson. And here comes that dragon again, the one who eats guys with big muscles.”).

Considering its scope, FUDGE works extraordinarily well. The FUDGE dice produce sensible results, and I can’t think of any role-playing fundamental that the rule book fails to address. However, FUDGE shares the same basic problem as every other universal RPG, from the

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**CHEETAH**

**ASSAULT GRIZZLY**

**IGUANA**

**SPITTING COBRA**

GURPS\* game to the Everway\* game; namely, it places an enormous burden on the referee. Not only must he role-play the NPCs, stage memorable encounters, and keep the story on track, he must also come up with Difficulty Levels for every conceivable situation. It ain't easy. (Quick: does scaling a wall at night require a Good or Great outcome? How about if the character has a grappling hook? How about if the character's drunk?) It's nice that O'Sullivan gives us his blessings to do whatever we want. But structure's nice, too. A few more concrete rules — or at least a few more concrete examples — would've gone a long way toward making FUDGE less of a concept and more of a game.

**Evaluation:** The publisher warns that "the basic rules are for experienced Game Masters," and that's a warning to take seriously; FUDGE is about as appropriate for novices as calculus is for preschoolers. Seasoned gamers, however, will be in for a pleasant surprise. Using the FUDGE guidelines, I created a credible system for one of my favorite genres — sentient kitchen appliances battling psychopathic house cats — in about half an hour. I can't even whip up a batch of real fudge in that time, and I'm a lot more efficient at cooking than designing RPGs. (Information: Grey Ghost Press, Inc., PO Box 838, Randolph, MA 02368-0838.)

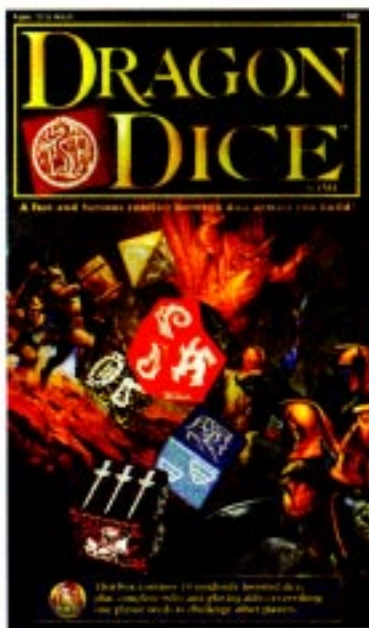


DRAGON DICE™ game  
18 dice, rules folder, various  
play aides, boxed  
TSR, Inc. \$10  
Design: Lester Smith  
Editing: Steve Miller  
Dice art: Stephen A. Daniele, Paul  
Jaquays, Renee Ciske, and Rob  
Lazzaretti  
Cover: Jeff Easley

A few of my favorite sounds: coins spilling into the tray of a slot machine; a voice on the phone saying, "This is Dr. Boone's office, calling to postpone your dental appointment"; handfuls of dice clattering across the dining room table.

The latter I experience as an almost sensual pleasure, the aural equivalent of having my back scratched or easing into a warm bath. And there's nothing like holding a pair of fresh dice, rattling them in my palm, rubbing my finger along their sleek faces, squeezing them, caressing them...

Ahh, DRAGON DICE — I think I'm in love.



Just as the Magic: the Gathering\* game is paradise for card fanatics, DRAGON DICE is nirvana for die-addicts. But where Magic is cheerfully derivative (borrowing many of its concepts from RPGs), DRAGON DICE is strikingly original (aside from the Cosmic Wimpout\* game

and craps, how many games can you think of that use nothing but dice?), Where Magic is clunky (I defy anybody to play it correctly after one reading of the rules), DRAGON DICE is elegant (20 minutes, tops, and you're ready to... ah, roll). True, Magic has that investment thing going for it, but the long-term prospects of Magic cards holding their value are, shall we say, open to debate.

Meanwhile, players who've thus far resisted DRAGON DICE can still get in on the ground floor of what promises to be a brand new hobby. Each player needs his own starter set, containing a random assortment of six-sided and ten-sided soldiers. A soldier-die's identification icon indicates its race — coral elf, dwarf, lava elf, or goblin. The die's color indicates its magical element — gold for earth, red for fire, green for water, blue for air. Action icons, such as Smite and Melee, depict its combat effectiveness. Maneuver icons — Horseshoes, Footprints, Claw Tracks, Sails — give an idea of how efficiently it moves. Eight-siders called terrain dice, with faces numbered 1-8, represent various types of territory, including coasts, swamps, and flatlands.

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Players use as many soldier-dice as they like, so long as the total number of Health Points (read: Hit Points) is the same for both opponents. Small six-siders, for example, have one Health, while large six-siders have three. Not only does the point system ensure play balance, it also puts players on reasonably equal footing; just because you're rich enough to afford a bagful of Enchanters and Deadeyes doesn't mean you'll get to use them.

Each player divides his soldiers into three armies: the home army, the campaign army, and the horde. One terrain die serves as the home terrain, another as the frontier terrain. A player's home army defends his home terrain, his horde attacks an enemy's home terrain, and his campaign army is placed near any other terrain die on the table.

Turns consist of attacks and maneuvers. On a standard attack, the attacking player rolls his army and tallies the Melee icons (Swords, Axes); each icon inflicts a hit. The defending army then rolls, with each Shield icon negating a hit. Four Melees and two Shields, then, result in a two-point loss, costing the defender a single two-point die or two one-point dice.

On a maneuver, two armies contesting the same terrain die are rolled; if the active player turns up as many or more Maneuver icons than the defender, he's allowed to adjust the terrain die one step up or down (if face five is showing, for instance, he can turn it to face four or six). If an army pushes a terrain die to face eight, it captures the terrain; the first side to capture two terrains wins the game.

Tactical options include missile fire and spell-casting, both of which depend on the facing of the contested terrain die. If a terrain die shows a Missile icon, the active army can attack from a distance with missile weapons; the number of Sling and Bow icons rolled determines the damage. A Magic icon on the terrain die allows an army to cast spells; depending on the color of the soldiers and the number of Magic icons they roll up, an army can cast such spells as breath of life (restores one Health) and reanimate dead (brings a dead unit back from the grave).

There's no obvious road to victory, which makes **DRAGON DICE** a candidate for endless replay. I've learned not to automatically increase the terrain number after a maneuver, since low numbers discourage melee attacks. And I've

learned that it's hard to mount a strong offense without a fair number of Magic and Missile soldiers. Even as a veteran of innumerable battles, I'm still not sure how to win. This is the kind of game that makes you wake up in the middle of the night, cursing yourself for deploying too many goblins and not enough dwarves.

Quibbles? Just a few. I had, and still have, a hard time telling the identification icons apart. I wish the dice were inscribed with names as well as images; to my tired old eyes, there's not much difference between a Thug and a Pelter, or a Duelist and a Bladesman. If you have the right dice, you can conjure up a dragon, but it's unclear from the rules exactly which army the dragon attacks (a game store guy cleared it up for me; apparently, a dragon can attack anyone). And I could live without the historical notes — all that stuff about fire worshippers and entropy spirits is a bit much for a dice duel.

**Evaluation:** This is my kind of wargame (and make no mistake — this is a wargame, not an RPG by any stretch). It's fast, intense, and heavy on the casualties. With a few incidental exceptions,

the rules are clear and complete; unlike, say, the first edition of **Magic or DUNGEONS & DRAGONS**, I don't expect an avalanche of errata. As for the dice, they look great, they feel great, and — as you'll confirm for yourself after your first toss — they sound great, too. Bliss!

## Short and sweet

**Murphy's World\*** game, by Kevin Davies with David Brown. Peregrine Games, \$20.

Here's a great premise: an RPG set on a world governed by Murphy's Law, which says that if anything can go wrong, it will. But is this a comedy or fantasy game? Beats me. The designers couldn't decide either.

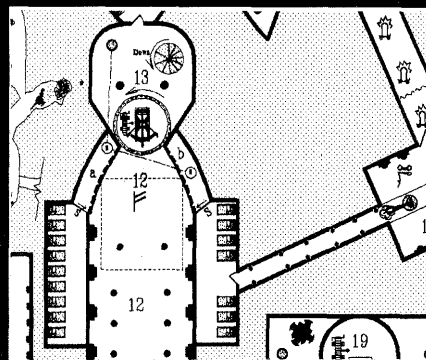
First we get some laughs, such as the illustration showing knights being pelted by giant dice. Then we get some fantasy, like the essay on teleportation gates. Then some more laughs: Reagombies, monsters modeled after Ronald Reagan who spout lines like, "You sound like a Godless Commie." Then more fantasy: the history of the Elves of Lyonesse. It was kind of a mess, unfocused and con-

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fusing, but I hung in there. At least I did until I got to the rules section, a blizzard of charts and formulas more suitable for a military simulation than a light-hearted RPG. (You can, in theory, adapt the rules to the game system of your choice, but that's easier said than done.) The Modified Skill Use rule reads, in part, "Whenever conditional modifiers are applied toward an action or Skill Use attempt, the player must consult the Known Skill/Attack Table [and find] the PC's current AS% for the Skill in question..." Combat resolution involves Initiative Values, Attack Modes, and the Wound Seriousness & Effects Based on Damage Inflicted on PC Table. A game this modest can't support the weight of all these numbers — it's like tying an anvil to a bunny rabbit. My advice to the designers: keep the jokes, ditch the rules, and try again.

Information: Peregrine, 83 Boston Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M4M 2T8, Canada.

*Pages from the Mages*, by Ed Greenwood and Tim Beach. TSR, Inc., \$15.

If you've been playing AD&D for any length of time, you've probably accumulated more spells that your wizards will ever get around to using. So why invest in another collection? First, *Pages from the Mages* takes a comprehensive look at the spellbooks themselves, discussing their physical qualities, special properties, and bizarre origins. We learn, for instance, that the electrum-flecked Chambeeleon was retrieved from the deck of a ghost ship, and that the previous owner of the Book of Shanglar the Black was killed by a swarm of crawling claws. Second, the whimsical style of Ed Greenwood (inventor of the FORGOTTEN REALM®) and Tim Beach (of RED STEEL® fame) makes the text a delight; "Any rogue can craft a spell," says Greenwood in the introduction, "but it takes a really reckless fool to write one down."

*Wyrms Footprints*, by Greg Stafford with Dave Hargreaves, Bill Johnson, and Charlie Krank. Chaosium Inc., \$16.

The presumed-dead Runequest\* game stumbles from the grave with this collection of articles from *Wyrms Footnotes* magazine, originally published in 1976-1982. "Myths of Pre-Creation" examines the intricacies of Glorantha religion. "The Sea of Neliom" documents the history of the Wartain Mertribe clans and their dominance of Western Genertela. And "Walktapus Cookery" pro-

vides carving instructions for octopus monsters and a recipe for Creamed Brains. I'd like to believe this excellent anthology will spearhead a Runequest revival, but I'm not holding my breath. Sadly, *Wyrms Footprints* reads like an epitaph.

*Castle Sites*, by Kevin Melka and Sam Witt. TSR, Inc., \$13.

In the tradition of the *City Sites* and *Country Sites* supplements, *Castle Sites* offers a selection of ready-to-go settings that can be plopped into any AD&D campaign. For a book purporting to provide "a detailed look into the workings of seven fantastic fortresses," the blueprints are disappointingly skimpy; the Shadow Kor castle labels only 18 above-ground areas, the full-page map of the Cloud Keep Giant's Tower doesn't have any labeled areas at all. The castles contain some memorable occupants, however, including a ghostly paladin and a studious lich. So maybe the fortresses are only semi-fantastic; they still make pretty good haunted houses.

*Mechwarrior Companion*, by Bryan Nystul and Blaine L. Pardoe with Loren Coleman, Robert Cruz, Phillip J. DeLuca, Chris Hartford, Detlef Howe, and Christopher Hussey. FASA Corporation, \$15.

This expansion for the second edition Mechwarrior\* role-playing game serves up an abundance of new archetypes (Dropship Captain, Crusader Elemental), skills (Battlesuit Piloting, Zero-G Operation), and gadgets (Neurohelmet, Seismic Sensor). The combat chapter provides detailed rules for man-to-man skirmishes as well as a clever system for combining Mechwarrior with the Battletech\* game. But the Companion's tidal wave of technology washes the characters out to sea; you'll have to look hard to find information about their personalities, backgrounds, and motivations. In other words, there's too much Mech and not enough Warrior.

*GURPS Robots*, by David L. Pulver. Steve Jackson Games, \$17

In his author's note, David Pulver claims to be android, and I'm inclined to believe him; this stunner of a GURPS sup-

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**Sky Point and Vivane**, by Carl Sargent and Marc Gascoigne. FASA Corporation, \$25. **Sky Point Adventures**, by Carl Sargent, Chris W. McCubbin, and Teeuwyn Woodruff. FASA Corporation, \$10.

Like its predecessor, *Parlainth: the Forgotten City*, the *Sky Point and Vivane* boxed set spotlights some of the Earthdawn\* game's most interesting real estate. Vivane, headquarters of the evil Theran Empire, is a wretched sprawl of ramshackle wharves, scruffy drinking dens, and diseased slaveyards. Sky Point's a bit cheerier, but not much; a fortified citadel perched on a platform hundreds of feet high, Sky Point stands ready to unleash an armada of airships to obliterate trespassers. The three-volume set features strong writing and evocative illustrations, but not many campaign springboards. For that you'll need *Sky Point Adventures*, a collection of terrific scenarios. The first stars an elusive thief, the second involves a purloined scroll. The third (and best) centers on a fiendish wizard and a den of creepy arachnids. Nothing revolutionary here, just frisky, inventive fantasy.

**Harbinger House**, by Bill Slavicsek. TSR, Inc., \$13.

This, the latest adventure for the PLANESCAPE™ setting, opens with a series

of brutal murders in Sigil, the work of... well, that's for the PCs to figure out. Their investigation takes them to the Outlands and back, pitting them against bizarre cultists and a nasty succubus. Slavicsek moves the story along at a brisk pace, and seasons the text with vivid descriptions; check out the names of these locales: Ecstasy the City of Plinths, the Ascension Drinking Hall, the Hovel on Blood Boil. I, for one, however, have had my fill of Sigil; it seems like every other PLANESCAPE supplement features the City of Doors, and I'm ready for a break. Here's hoping future episodes give us a close-up of Mechanus or Pandemonium — after all, we have a whole multiverse to explore.

**Frog Juice\*** game, by Monty and Ann Stambler. Gamewright, Inc., \$5.

I figured this had something to do with amphibians and food processors. Turns out it's a charming little card game, easy enough for kids, yet engaging enough for undemanding grown-ups. Players attempt to accumulate points by casting spells (you need Toads and Mice to cast *[[uglifying]]*) capturing cards (one

Toadstool and two Shrinking Brews capture a Monkey Powder), and sweeping the table clean (with a Witch's Broom). What happens if you miscalculate? You croak, of course.

Information: Gamewright, Inc., PO Box 120, Boston, MA 02258.

*Rick Swan has designed and edited more than 56 role-playing products. He has also sold one (1) joke to Rodney Dangerfield. You can write to him at 2620 30th Street, Des Moines, IA 50370. Enclose a self-addressed envelope if you'd like a reply.*

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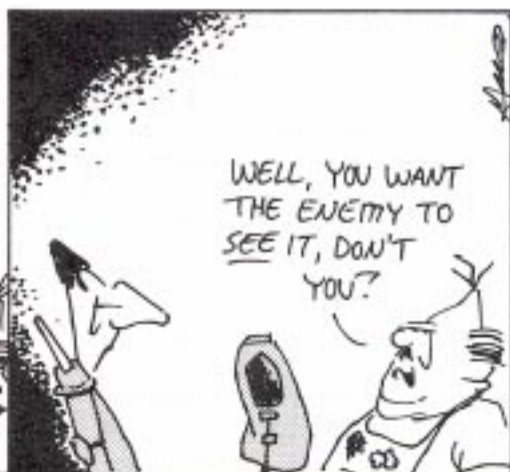
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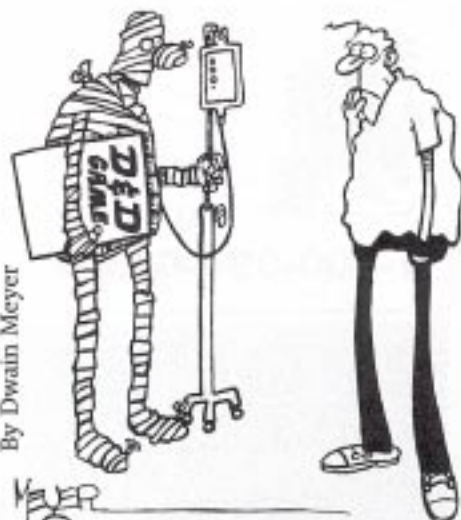
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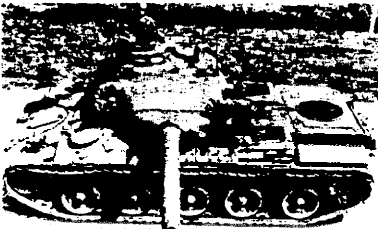
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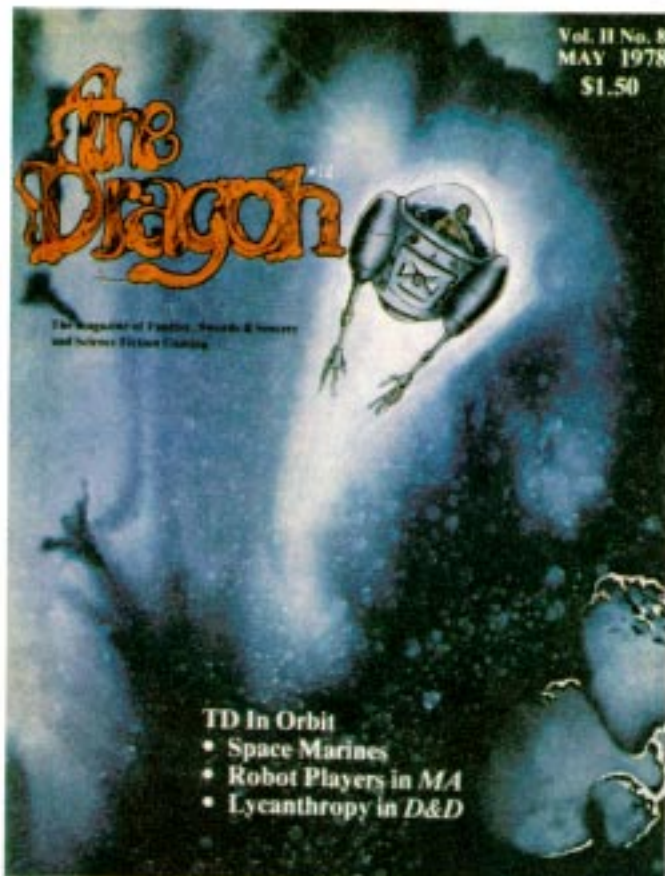


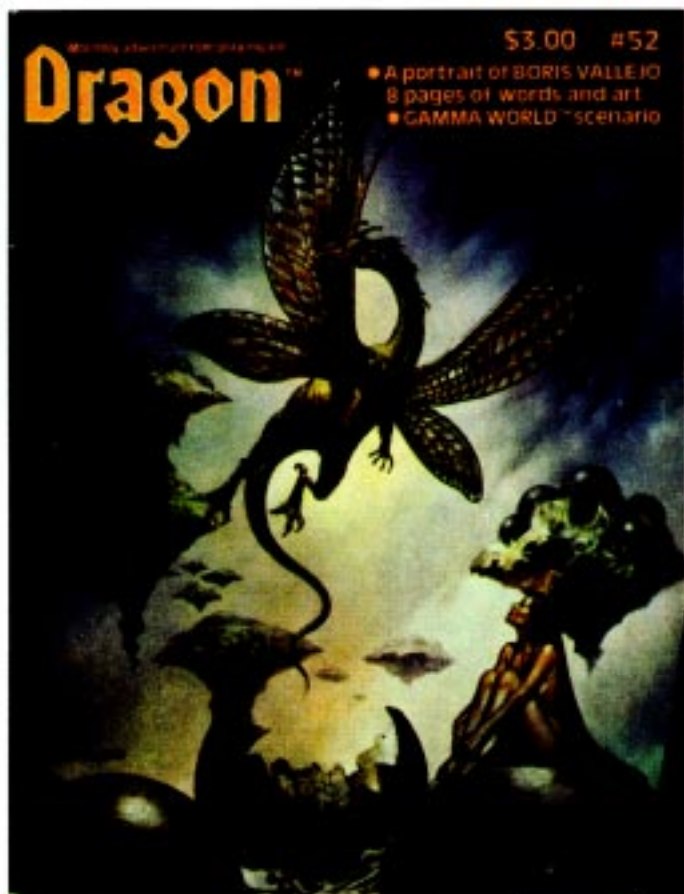
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# The Changing Faces of Dragon<sup>®</sup> Magazine

Over the years our look has reflected a growing hobby





In its 20-year history, *DRAGON® Magazine* has seen quite a few changes. These few pages will give you but a brief look at the most visible face of the DRAGON: the covers.

The original cover logotype, the “melting, reptilian letters,” appeared from 1974 to 1979, issues #1-26.

For one scant year — August, 1979 to June, 1980 (issues #27-38) — the title was *The DRAGON*, but using the now familiar Honda typeface. This typeface lasted virtually unchanged until December of 1995. In fact, our new logotype is a variation on Honda.

It was during these early years that the magazine was referred to within its own pages as “TD.” These were also the early years of our first popular comic strip “Fineous Fingers.”

Issue #39 brought with it a few changes. The first was the name. No longer was the magazine known as “*The DRAGON*”; now it was simply “*DRAGON*.” There is a certain test of how long one has been into the

AD&D® hobby which some consider a kind of shibboleth: old timers tend to call us “*The DRAGON*” while those who have only been around since, say, the early 100s, call us “*DRAGON Magazine*.”

Issue #39 came out in July, 1980. It introduced a simple, solid border framing the graphic on the cover. This border remained in place for about a year. Its last appearance was on issue #51 (July, 1981). There was only one interruption: for some reason, issue #48 had no frame. The frame served as a carrier for cover blurbs, telling what was in the issue at hand. Before that, cover blurbs had appeared directly on the cover art.

The real return to full-cover art came with issue #52 (August, 1981). The return was accomplished in style, as the cover painting was an original work of art by Boris Vallejo, which appears at left.

This new cover style, with the previous unchanged logotype, was to remain virtually intact until issue #128 (December, 1987), when the word “Magazine”



We were a trademark of TSR, Inc., and bore the "TM" mark until issue #76 (August, 1983), when **DRAGON** became a registered trademark and the TM was replaced by the ® symbol. This was perhaps the most minor change the cover has ever gone through.

In December, 1987, with issue #128, we became *DRAGON® Magazine*. The addition of the word "Magazine" in a banner below the **DRAGON** remained in place, and this logotype stayed largely unchanged until now.

The addition of a subtle shadow to the word "DRAGON" was a minor stylistic change that appeared in issue #167 (March, 1991).

For issue #181 (May, 1992), the final change was made to the logotype: the letters in the word "Dragon" were graphically stretched to about 150% their original height, making the word appear taller and thinner.



This is the logotype that saw us through until this month. Art director Larry Smith played with several designs, and we looked at several new typestyles, as well, before Larry decided to return to the original Honda (if "return" is the word, considering that we had never totally left it) and created our dynamic new logotype.

We wanted to change the look and feel of the whole magazine, and Larry's logotype set the pace. The new cover design has a more active, lively, and striking feel. Something of a stronger image.



Dragons will be featured prominently on the covers of many upcoming issues of the magazine. We consider it an experiment in creativity. How many different ways can you use a dragon? We'll let you know.

Some of the finest artists in several media have created art for *DRAGON Magazine*, both internally and on the cover. We intend to keep bringing you the best that there is.

Thank you for reading. We hope you have enjoyed — and will continue to enjoy — *DRAGON Magazine*.



The internal format has changed as well. For most of the magazine's history, there was little real evolution in the interior. For example, a *DRAGON Magazine* of 1995 looked very much like a *DRAGON Magazine* of 1985. This was something we wanted to rectify.

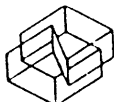
Still, there are things we have no desire or intention to change. Our covers have seen many different art styles. We have had the beautiful and somewhat ethereal art of Boris Vallejo, the surreal beauty of Larry Elmore, the harsh realism of Brom, and even the whimsical humor of Phil Foglio.



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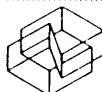
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## the ROLE OF BOOKS

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### *The Shape-Changer's Wife*

Sharon Shinn  
Ace

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It's apt that Peter Beagle provides a cover testimonial for Sharon Shinn's first novel. For just as Beagle's *The Last Unicorn* is well-loved for blending the ordinary, the wondrous, and the wise in its evocation of unicorns, so does Sharon Shinn meld the same elements in her exploration of the theory and practice of shifting shape.

We begin with two wizards: Aubrey, a young man of considerable talent, and Glyrenden, a veteran sorcerer whose rep-

utation is legendary and whose skills at magical shape-craft are even more so. Somewhat unexpectedly, Glyrenden has agreed to take Aubrey on as a student, and when Aubrey arrives at the older wizard's remote manor, he finds that the household includes a wife whose existence no tale has reported.

From just this simple an opening, Shinn proceeds to develop an intricate tale of bland routine and dark undercurrent. Glyrenden is a puzzling yet thorough tutor, absent as often as he is in residence. His wife Lilith is reserved, yet fascinated by the changes Aubrey introduces into her life. And his two servants are both odd, mostly silent folk who do their jobs well but are disliked by the folk of the village nearby.

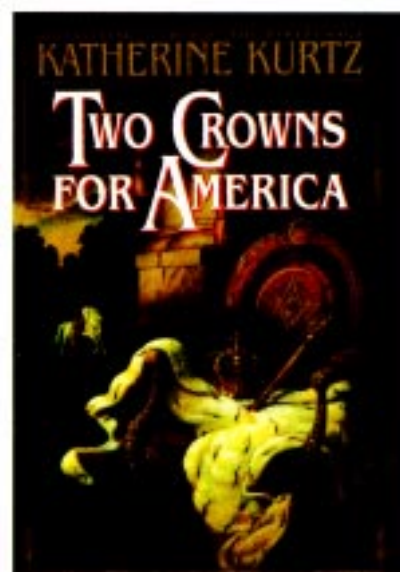
Shinn develops her characters and their relationships with subtlety and depth — this is the sort of novel that is deceptively simple to a casual reader, yet fiercely intimate and ethically complex on closer examination. There are deep passions here, and soul-wrenching choices, but there are also plain-spoken tavernkeepers and entirely ordinary matters of housekeeping. Yet all these things are twined into and through the evolving bond between Aubrey and Lilith, and into the hold Glyrenden has on both. But that bond is nothing so mundane as your average romance, and Shinn's narrative voice never once slips out of character nor loses its calm, matter-of-fact clarity.

*The Shape-Changer's Wife* would be an extraordinary tale from any hand; that it is the work of a new writer is nothing short of amazing. Sharon Shinn isn't writing ordinary commercial-grade fantasy, or even good commercial-grade fantasy. This is a debut novel of a kind and quality seen perhaps once a decade, and readers who seek it out won't be disappointed.

### *Two Crowns for America*

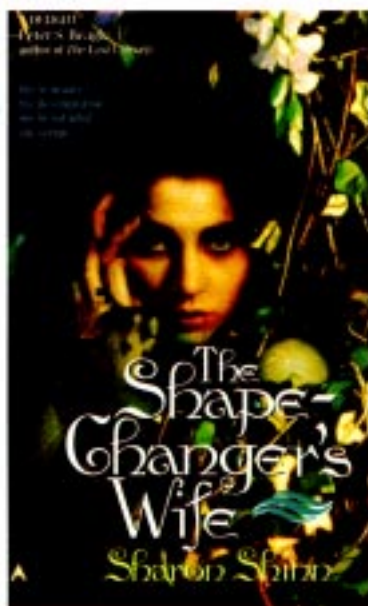
Katherine Kurtz  
Bantam Spectra

\$22.95



The sticker on the front of the galley calls *Two Crowns for America* "historical fiction," while the text on the back says it's a historical fantasy. But whichever label one chooses, Katherine Kurtz's latest novel suffers from the fate of all too many history texts: it is strikingly, unabashedly dull.

Part of the problem is that for Kurtz and her longtime readers, the premise is on familiar ground. While the colonial American setting is new to Kurtz, we've met these characters before: a small band of dedicated mystics, secretly devoted to preserving their land from its enemies. Just as Camber of Culdi worked *Deryni* magic from the shadows to set one Cinhil Haldane on the throne of medieval Gwynedd, so does Andrew Wallace invoke Masonic ritual to aid George Washington in securing the



cause of American independence.

But where the Deryni tales feature dangerous, suspenseful wars of intrigue waged against implacable foes, the current tale falters badly. Though the novel is set in the midst of war, the war itself takes place entirely offstage. We get one brief glimpse of a single battle, and are told obliquely about a secondary character's role as a spy. Kurtz pays little attention to her British, and her narrative casts the Revolution as more a political and economic conflict than a moral one. Indeed, there are no true villains in the book at all. The only real opposition in the story comes from one over-eager Mason whose lapse in judgment is quickly forgiven and set aside.

Nor does the novel work as a character study. Like most of Kurtz's protagonists, Andrew Wallace and his colleagues are secure in their powers and purposes; it is never in question that their hearts are pure and their cause worthy. The only player on Kurtz's chessboard who grows and changes during the novel is Washington, but though Washington is the keystone of the plot, he's at best a secondary presence in the book. For all that Kurtz is supposedly engaging in speculative history, the novel is remarkably cautious about tinkering with the known record.

What this leaves is the careful, dramatic treatment of esoteric ritual that's often cited as Kurtz's particular strength. Here again, however, the novel falters. There is little sense of the otherworldly here, far less than in the Deryni series or even the collaborative Adept tales. Only one character, the shadowy Count of Saint-Germain, appears to possess true mystical or alchemical powers, and these are given but scant attention in the course of the story.

Ultimately, *Two Crowns for America* is a puzzle. It's readable enough, but it's oddly flavorless. The genuine history is ordinary, the historical speculation lacks any sense of impact, and the mystical elements are mild-mannered at best. From a novelist of Katherine Kurtz's experience and reputation, this book is a major disappointment.

### ***Ghostlight***

**Marion Zimmer Bradley**

**Tor \$22.95**

Walls riddled with secret passages, libraries full of occult manuscripts and



arcane lore, a small band of misfits and eccentrics pursuing a dream of ultimate mystical power; these are the familiar ingredients of many a Gothic thriller. Into their midst, in Marion Zimmer Bradley's newest novel, comes a woman who is at once a Gothic heroine, a modern scientist, and the heir to far more than she is prepared to believe.

This is the foundation of *Ghostlight*, and it finds veteran novelist Bradley at the top of her form. Though she is better known for epic fantasy and for the long-running *Darkover* cycle, Bradley is no stranger to occult suspense. In fact, a handful of oblique references link the present volume to a group of three loosely connected modern supernatural yarns. This latest book, though, is less easily pigeonholed. Otherworldly forces are certainly loose in *Shadow's Gate*, and the climax is impressively pyrotechnic. But until very late in the game, Truth Jourdemayne's story is less a dark fantasy than a straightforward tale of romantic suspense à la Barbara Michaels. Or it would be, if there were a serious love interest...

Whatever the classification, Bradley's storytelling is smooth yet relentless. Truth, a paranormal researcher by training, has a Gothic heroine's past: her father, Thorne Blackburn, has been missing for 30 years following a disastrous magical ritual during which Truth's mother died. Now she's been drawn back to *Shadow's Gate*, site of the ceremony, where a new coven of would-be sorcerers plan to re-enact the ritual for their own ends. But odd things are happening in the old house, and there are severe gaps in the coven's reconstructed liturgy, such that spectacular failure is a very real possibility.

It's in the evocation of the neo-pagan magical lore that Bradley stands out. Truth's research expertise has made her very much the scientist, deeply interested in spiritual phenomena but committed to explaining it by rational means. By contrast, Thorne Blackburn is described as an unabashed child of the 1960s, who invented as much of his magickal tradition as he borrowed from truly ancient lore. And, according to Bradley, Blackburn shared the common '60s fascination with recreational drugs and uninhibited sex. While Bradley's narrative clearly postulates that there really is magic in the world, it also grounds its neo-paganism firmly in common sense. That's a refreshingly honest approach to this flavor of witchery, and it lends an air of unusual plausibility to the tale as it unfolds.

*Ghostlight* also manages the considerable virtue of remaining true to its genre's traditions without yielding to cliché. Readers may pick up on one or two plot points before Truth does, but she's neither an inept heroine nor possessed of unreasonably bad judgment. And the apparent secret of Thorne Blackburn's mysterious origins is one that few practitioners of occult suspense could justify with a straight face. Bradley, though, makes it work with no difficulty.

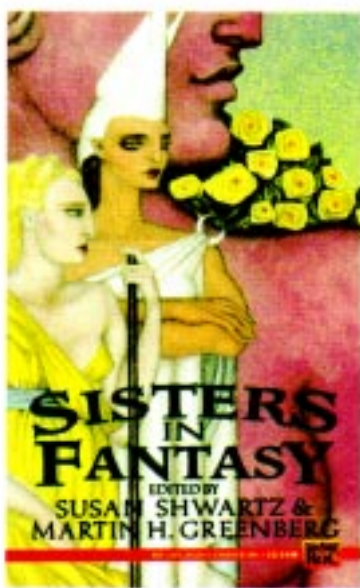
Which is all the more reason that fans of Bradley's better-known tales of Arthurian lore and high adventure on *Darkover* should seek out her tales of present-day supernatural affairs. *Ghostlight* is one of her best-realized works, and the news that a sequel is in preparation is welcome indeed.

### ***Sisters in Fantasy***

**Susan Shwartz  
and Martin H. Greenberg, eds  
Roc \$4.99**

"To my way of thinking," writes Susan Shwartz, "nothing ruins good fiction faster than a lecture." There's a wry irony in the comment, though, because the essay in which it appears neatly disproves the point. In *Sisters in Fantasy*, Shwartz doesn't just have a keen eye for intriguing stories; she also explains her choices in concise, cogent prose that makes its points without getting in the way of the tales themselves. And the choices, by and large, are equally wise.

As a result, the anthology isn't always as light and friendly as, say, *Chicks in*



*Chainmail* (recently reviewed in this space) or the average *Sword & Sorceress* volume. There will be stories that don't "click" for some readers; Phyllis Ann Karr's "Babbitt's Daughter," perhaps, whose ideal audience needs a background in modern mainstream fiction. Nancy Kress's recasting of the extra-Biblical legend of Lilith in "Unto the Daughters" is arguably a touch too flip-pant for its own good. And Sheila Finch's intimate "Firstborn, Seaborn" ends on a note that some may find both ambiguous and unsettling.

The mood of the volume tends decidedly to the dark. Tanith Lee's "Felixity," Phyllis Eisenstein's "No Refunds" and Lisa Goldstein's "A Game of Cards" all tell contemporary tales well-steeped in cynicism; of the three, Eisenstein's account of a fortune-teller's gifts yields least to bitterness and clings closest to hope.

That's not to say, however, that the book lacks diversity. Its first story, from Jo Clayton, is a twisty assassin's yarn full of counterplots and hidden targets, while Katharine Kerr's concluding tale is a canny bit of bardic fencing in which one Paran of Aberwyn meets a woman who's more than he expects. Back in the present day, Kristine Kathryn Rusch offers an effective, oblique cross of private-eye routine with familiar folklore, and Josepha Sherman's "Healer" reaches back into prehistory for a simply told shamanic fable that is nonetheless powerful.

Smoothly told tales also come from Elizabeth Moon, Andre Norton, and Janny Wurts, and Jane Yolen contributes a potent scrap of cautionary poetry. But the highlight of the volume is Judith

Tarr's "Remedia Amoris," which wraps Greek myth, modern tragedy, mutual sacrifice, and soul-deep joy into a superbly tied Gordian knot. Throughout the anthology, editor Schwartz has chosen stories that engage the intellect as well as entertaining the reader; Tarr, more than anyone else in the book, takes the third step and pulls her audience's emotions in as well.

That one selection is worth a gold star all by itself, but *Sisters in Fantasy* is just as noteworthy on its collective merits. In the constant stream of SF and fantasy anthologies now being published, Schwartz's compilation stands out, combining solid entertainment value with stories that will stand up to several rereadings without going stale. Add to that Schwartz's perceptive yet unobtrusive commentary, and you have a rare treasure of a book.

### ***Dragons of Summer Flame***

Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman

TSR \$23.99

It's been a number of years since I put forth the proposition that the original **DRAGONLANCE®** novels were among the few high fantasy epics to successfully follow in the footsteps of J. R. R. Tolkien's legendary *Lord of the Rings* cycle. More literary-minded followers of the genre have been shaking their heads at me ever since. No doubt they're going to do it again now, because *Dragons of Summer Flame* brings Krynn's original chroniclers back to the fold and puts a capstone on the entire **DRAGONLANCE** cycle that transforms Krynn as thoroughly as Frodo remade Middle Earth when the One Ring fell into the fires of Mount Doom.

That said, it's tricky to talk about the novel's plot without giving away more than is wise. The beginning is ominous enough by itself: the little-seen Irda have managed to capture the equally mysterious Graygem of Gargath, and seek to unleash the core of its power. They're worried, with reason, about the threat to Ansalon posed by the dark Lord Ariakan and the Knights of Takhisis. But tapping the Graygem's secret releases an even more cataclysmic danger, and before long even the gods are fighting for their very lives.

Palin Majere and Steel Brightblade are the tale's primary keystones, the one a young mage bound to the White Robes and the other a loyal knight of the Dark

Queen. There are, however, brief appearances from many of the original Heroes of the Lance. The irrepressible Tasslehoff Burrfoot plays a major role, the true fate of Raistlin is finally revealed, and the matter of Raistlin's supposed daughter is resolved.

Weis and Hickman retain the even-tempered style that has marked their tales of Krynn all along, and the years have added a light polish to their prose. Tasslehoff's exploits in particular are related with a touch more understatement than before, though with no less impish a gleam in his creators' eyes. Minor characters are also treated perhaps a bit more deftly, one notable example being Flare, Steel's blue dragon mount. Likewise, the authors have done a mostly skillful job of tying up loose ends. The Graygem's secret is a chillingly logical twist, and the obligatory curtain call by the ever-hatless wizard Fizban is handled wisely and well.

If anything, though, the moderate, even mild tone of the novel is somewhat at odds with its world-shattering scope. There is an air of calm about the tale that seems a trifle bizarre at times, considering the nature of the threat posed to Ansalon and the hellish pyrotechnics unleashed in the grand finale. The precise timing of events occasionally seems uncertain, such that it's hard to tell how closely an incident taking place at one location precedes or follows something occurring half a continent away.

That sort of criticism, though, amounts to trying to measure the wind speed of a hurricane. The ultimate question raised by *Dragons of Summer Flame* is this: does the story it tells fit the world as it has been created and developed over the years, or does it merely repre-



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sent change for change's sake (and, thereby, an excuse for a host of new gaming accessories)?

The answer is that the story does fit its milieu. The original saga of Krynn was deliberately cast as an epic in the classic mold, in which sacrifice was an essential component of heroism. That's one of the defining elements of Tolkien's work as well, and of the Norse mythology from which part of Middle Earth's lore springs. One can't have Odin and Thor without also taking Loki and the promise of Ragnarok; likewise the epic of Krynn's history is not quite whole without the turning of an age. And as dramatic as the original Wars of the Lance were, the wealth of tales that have appeared in their wake demonstrate that while those conflicts defined Krynn, they didn't transform it. **Dragons of Summer Flame**, though, does transform Krynn, marking the turn of an age as does Sauron's passing from Middle Earth or as Balder's death brings twilight to Asgard.

For a novel set in a role-playing universe, that's an unprecedented feat. It's long been held that the one thing one can't do in series fiction, be it *Star Trek* or Doc Savage or **DRAGONLANCE**, is rewrite the bible. Doc Savage can't die, Captain Kirk will always have the U.S.S. Enterprise (in the novels, at least), and Fizban will always be around to cast a fireball (furbelow? floor bell?) when you really need one. Or so goes the theory: but Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman have successfully turned the theory on its ear.

It's worth pointing out that none of this necessarily makes the **DRAGONLANCE** saga capital-L Literature. Krynn's wholly invented mythology will always have a synthetic quality when held against Tolkien's master template, and Tad Williams, in his *Memory, Sorrow, and Thorn* trilogy, remains the sole major author to return to Tolkien's starting point and bring forth a completely new yet complementary work from the same roots.

Still, Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman have carved themselves an important niche in the history of epic fantasy, and **Dragons of Summer Flame** completes their original trilogy on a resounding note. Krynn will never be the same again; and that is as it should be.

## Recurring Roles

It's been a busy season for fans of Mercedes Lackey. **Storm Rising** (DAW, \$21.95) continues the histories of Valdemar in their usual polished fashion. The focus is a bit scattered, and a character arc involving the Tayledras mage Firesong has its impact abruptly blunted near the end of the book, but followers of the series should nonetheless be generally pleased. Meanwhile, **The Fire Rose** (Baen, \$22.00) presents a completely free-standing twist on the "Beauty and the Beast" idea, placing a sedate romantic tale in the bustling atmosphere of 1906 San Francisco. The charm here is in heroine Rosalind Hawkins, and the only liability a peculiar arrangement of villains in which the seeming arch-nemesis mostly takes second place to a scheming apprentice.

The line of novels spun off from the Magic: the Gathering\* card game continues to improve steadily. Most recent at this writing, and most enjoyable, is Mark Sumner's **The Prodigal Sorcerer** (Harper-Prism, \$5.50). Although the title character actually has a relatively minor part in the tale, and there are few other overt allusions to the game, Sumner's story of three traditionally opposed races forced into reluctant peacemaking is well within the spirit of Dominion lore, and the characters are an appealing lot.

Notable from the *Star Trek* franchise is a collaboration between Greg Cox and John Gregory Betancourt, in which **Deep Space Nine** finds itself hip-deep in Hortas. **Devilin the Sky** (Pocket, \$5.50) is an ingenious, suspenseful yarn that brings the silicon-based tunnelers to the space station in hopes of revitalizing Bajor's mining industry. The Cardassians, not surprisingly, have other ideas, but what they intend as a stalemate turns into something much more dangerous when a host of baby Hortas naturally start eating everything in sight. But since the Hortas are on our side, one can't simply phaser them into oblivion.

**Decalog 2: Lost Property** (Doctor Who Books, \$5.95) presents a second group of 10 stories about everyone's favorite Time Lord and his friends. Linked by theme rather than plot, the focus is on various bits of real estate owned or occupied by the Doctor over the centuries. It's a

diverse, mostly appealing collection, with highlights including David A. McIntee's tale of Sarah Jane Smith and K-9, and Matthew Jones's "The Nine-Day Queen," in which the first Doctor and his companions land in 1553, where one Lady Jane Grey has become the pawn of forces deadlier than English politics.

**City of Bones** (Tor, \$22.95) is Martha Wells' second novel. A departure from her previous *The Elements of Fire*, it vividly creates a vaguely Middle Eastern world in which bits of shattered ancient technology have long since been redefined as myth and magic. A complicated tale of intrigue and discovery, it's easily as good as Wells' first book, and that's very good indeed.

Last but not least, Margaret Ball's newest novel is **Lost in Translation** (Baen, \$5.99). This time, her modern-day protagonist is a college girl who's entirely too laid back for her own good, as she eventually discovers when she's accidentally pulled into a different world where the prevailing science is medieval magic, and the Dean of the college is after her soul. Ball is consistently good at this sort of light romantic fantasy, and this novel is no exception to the trend.

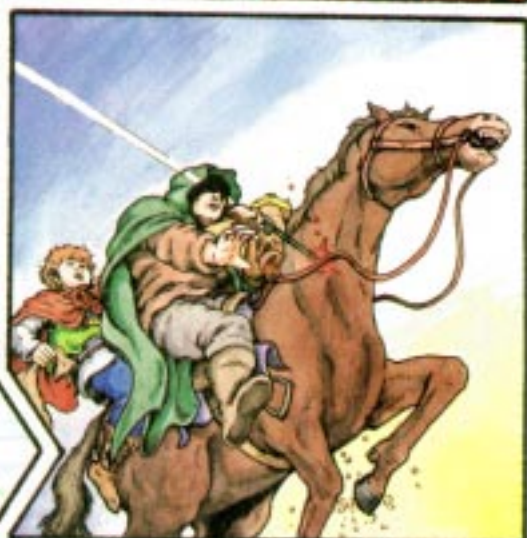
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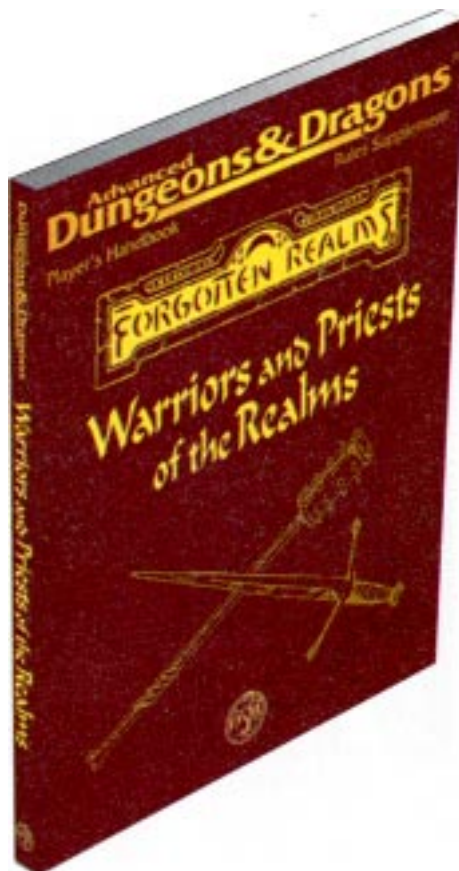
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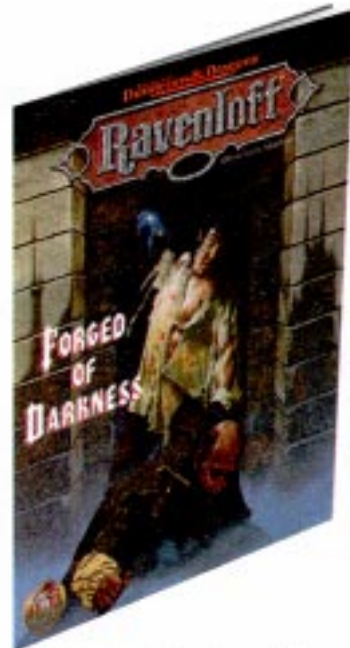


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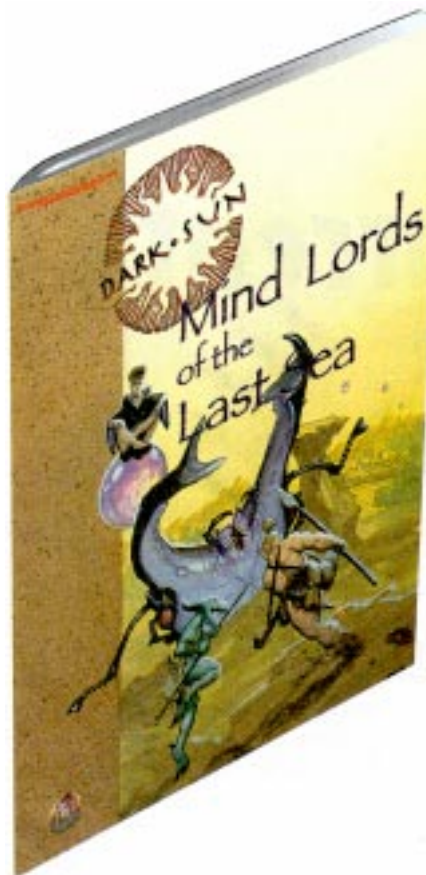
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## Clack

*Continued from page 120*

## Word from all over

The Mekton\* robot combat RPG from R. Talsorian Games (Berkeley, CA) now has a high-profile computer version, bundled free with every Indigo 2 Extreme Workstation. Indigos are high-end graphics computers that generate special effects for many computer games, movies, and the Babylon 5 TV series. Silicon Graphics, the manufacturer, developed the Mekton game to show off the new Extreme's abilities. Just in case you can't spring for an Indigo 2 (price: \$35K), RTG is looking to port the game to a home platform.

RTG's Castle Falkenstein\* game is also jumping to a new medium: fiction. George Alec Effinger (When Gravity Fails) wrote the first CF novel, From Prussia With Love, published in December (Prima Press, \$5.99). His second, Masterminds of Falkenstein, involves Lady Ada Lovelace and her sapient Calculation Engine; it's due this spring.

The Feng Shui\* role-playing game from Daedalus Entertainment (Seattle, WA) has been delayed until March. Set against the same background as the Shadowfist\* card

game, the Feng Shui game takes its cue from the high-flying Hong Kong action movies of John Woo, Tsui Hark, and others, although Daedalus stresses that players needn't know these movies. Robin D. Laws (the Barsaive boxed set for FASA's Earthdawn\* RPG, the Cut-Ups expansion for the On the Edge\* trading card game from Atlas) designed both the Shadowfist and Feng Shui games simultaneously. Daedalus plans an ambitious support line for both games, where each card game expansion gets a companion supplement describing the cards in role-playing terms.

West End Games (Honesdale, PA) has produced a four-page booklet that converts its MasterBook system (based on the Shatterzone\* game) to and from the "d6" system used in Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game\*. West End's Greg Farshtey says, "The conversion will be published in MasterBook Companion, upcoming Star Wars products, and upcoming MasterBook products (beginning with Indiana Jones' Artifacts in February.) It will also be included in the January Tales from the Crypt\* boxed set. It will be uploaded on GENIE and America Online, and I expect we will also make it available free for an SASE." Future MasterBook supplements will include game statistics for both systems.

## Some game company Web sites

Here are World Wide Web page addresses for several role-playing game companies.

### Atlas Games:

[www.io.com/user/presage/agindex.html](http://www.io.com/user/presage/agindex.html)

### Black Dragon Press:

[www.sunrem.com/~bdp/](http://www.sunrem.com/~bdp/)

### Chameleon Eclectic:

[skynet.bevc.blackburg.va.us/cee/](http://skynet.bevc.blackburg.va.us/cee/)

### Chaosium:

[www.sirius.com/~chaosium/chaosium.htm](http://www.sirius.com/~chaosium/chaosium.htm)

### R. Talsorian Games:

[www.best.com/~willmoss/rtg/toc.html](http://www.best.com/~willmoss/rtg/toc.html)

### Ragnarok:

[www.ccsi.com/~graball/ragnarok](http://www.ccsi.com/~graball/ragnarok)

### Steve Jackson Games:

[www.io.com/sjgames](http://www.io.com/sjgames)

### Wizards of the Coast:

[www.wizards.com](http://www.wizards.com)

Send news, press releases, and reasonably accurate gossip to Allen Varney at [a.varney1@genie.geis.com](mailto:a.varney1@genie.geis.com).

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# the Current Clack

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## Games Workshop suit

Are Games Workshop boardgames and Citadel miniatures at your store cheaper or pricier than before? Do they hit the shelves faster? Different stores report different results of the British company's September decision to sell its products directly to American retailers, bypassing the standard system of independent distributors.

In general, Workshop's new arrangement benefits large game stores and chains, but hurts stores carrying only a small game line. Until recently, Chris Heismann managed the Scandia Family Fun Center in Rohnert Park, CA, which carried a game line as prizes for arcade game players. In October he said, "We don't carry many gaming supplies, and barely met the \$250-a-quarter minimum our distributor has. Now GW wants us to order from them, and they have the same \$250-per-quarter minimum. Sure, we get a better price on their stuff than before, but now we have to not only buy different stuff to make up for our distributor not carrying the GW stuff, we have to double our expense (and shelf space) in order to even carry GW stuff." The Fun Center stopped carrying the Workshop line, and for unrelated reasons later dropped games altogether. Large stores now get their Workshop orders faster and more reliably, however.

Retailer and consumer reactions to the Workshop policy are mixed, but distributors are unanimous: they don't like it.

**The suit:** On September 21, 1995, three major American distributors – Wargames West (New Mexico), The Armory (Maryland), and Greenfield (Michigan) – filed suit in New Mexico's Second Judicial District Court against Games Workshop. The suit, for unspecified damages, charges GW with restraint of trade, fraud, unfair trade practices, and violations of anti-trust laws. "The complaint further alleges that Games

Workshop began actively soliciting many of the Plaintiffs' retail customers," says a press release, "despite prior assurances that it would not do so."

Pending resolution of the complaint, the distributors gained a temporary restraining order that enjoins the Workshop from contacting any "purchaser or possible future purchaser" from any of the three distributors. Armory president Max Lipman says the order guarantees "an even playing field," in that it forbids Games Workshop from shipping to retailers before it ships to the three distributors. Two judges, at circuit and federal court levels, have upheld the order, which expired December 1. At press time Lipman was confident that the plaintiffs could get the restraining order renewed. Lipman speculated that the suit would not reach court before early summer.

## Comings and goings

Lester Smith has left TSR. Smith has followed his old boss Tim Brown (former Creative Services director at TSR) to Comico, publisher of the forthcoming Chrysalis\* trading card game. Both Smith and Brown came to TSR four years ago from GDW in Chicago, where Smith designed the Dark Conspiracy\* RPG.

Bill Bridges, line developer of the Werewolf: The Apocalypse\* Storyteller game, has left White Wolf Game Studio (Atlanta, GA) to join the computer game company HDI (Stone Mountain, GA), creator of titles such as Machiavelli: The Prince and Battles of Destiny. HDI president (and former White Wolf editor) Andrew Greenberg said he and Bridges will design a paper role-playing game based on the company's forthcoming dark science-fiction strategy game Emperor of the Fading Suns, described as "Machiavelli meets Battles of Destiny with lots of cool stuff thrown in." The paper RPG takes up where the computer game finishes. Both games are currently

scheduled for August.

Under Bridges the Werewolf game recently began outselling White Wolf's companion Vampire\* game for the first time, spurred by the great popularity of the RAGE\* trading card game based on the RPG. The new Werewolf game line editor is Ethan Skempe, a White Wolf staff editor and developer (Vampire: The Dark Ages).

## Magazine notes

White Wolf's *Inphobia* folded with issue #61. Last year the former *White Wolf* magazine changed its name and turned the Attitude knob way up as part of an effort to seek a broader audience, without success. Editor Ken Cliffe, a prominent presence in every *Inphobia* article, continues as supervisor of White Wolf's roleplaying games.

Jolly Blackburn, founding editor of *Shadis* magazine, has resigned over creative differences with Alderac Entertainment Group (Chino Hills, CA), publisher of *Shadis* and the Legends of the Five Rings\* trading card game. Blackburn and AEG part amicably. His popular "Knights of the Dinner Table" comic strip, which originally ran in *Shadis*, will be seen in these pages ere long.

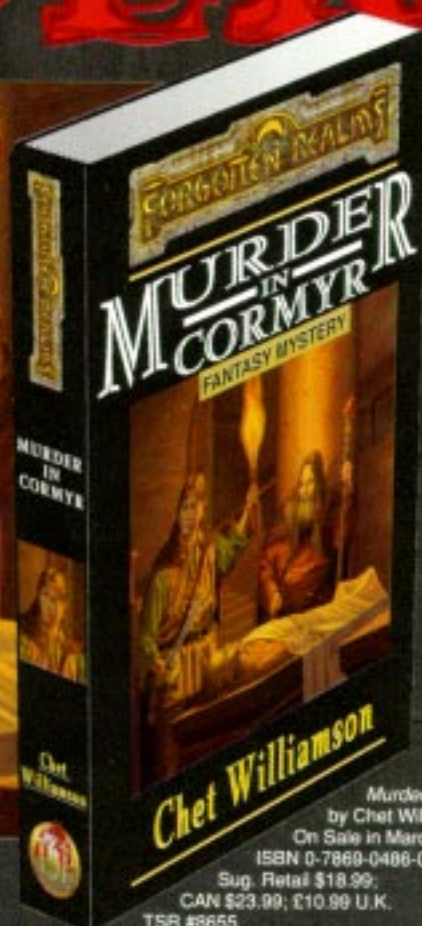
Haven't seen an issue of *Cryptych* in a long time, have you? Editor J. M. White suspended the magazine last spring, but it may return with a new focus someday. White is devoting her efforts to *Cryptych's* companion magazine, *Scrye: Guide to Collectible Card Games*. An authentic hit, *Scrye's* circulation is said to be over 125,000. Other card-game magazines have achieved equally impressive numbers, and circulation of *The Duelist* (from Wizards of the Coast in Seattle) is rumored to top 200,000. Of magazines devoted primarily to role-playing, *DRAGON Magazine* remains by far the largest\*.

*Continued on page 119*

# MURDER



## IN THE

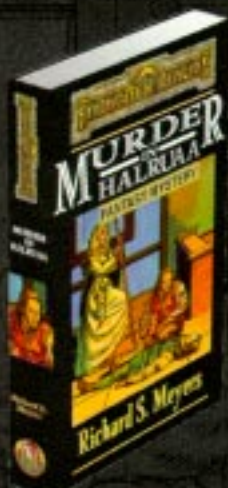


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